



THE INDEPENDENT

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Women win protection from 'second rape' in the witness box

Rape victims who suffer the ordeal of cross-examination by their attackers are to be given new protection, Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, has told 'The Independent'.

Donald Macintyre and Michael Streeter discuss his reaction to cases that disgusted the country, and which he describes as a continuation of rape in court.

The key to protecting rape victims in the witness box is likely to be a more active role for judges. They could take over

the questioning of the women themselves to prevent "excessive" cross-examination by their alleged attackers. Lord Irvine said yesterday.

He admits that the public is "enormously concerned" at recent cases in which accused rapists have subjected women to long and taunting questioning in the witness box. Alleged rapists who were representing themselves were being permitted, "as it seems to some members of the public to extend the rape by other means - the other means being cross examination. It must be addressed urgently".

Earlier this month, a Crown Court judge called for a change in the law after he sentenced a rapist who "mercilessly" cross-

examined two victims for several days. Ministers have already announced a wide-ranging inter-departmental review to consider the issue. Now, Lord Irvine is promising brisk action.

Considering possible solutions, the Lord Chancellor highlighted the role of the trial judge. He said: "You could, for example, contemplate the judge intervening and taking over the cross-examination himself if his attempts to restrict excessive cross-examination by alleged rapists of their victims was simply not being obeyed."

"The judge is in control of his own court," said Lord Irvine. But taking over cross-examination would be an option "only after his reasonable ef-

forts to restrict cross-examination to what is relevant and necessary for a fair defence by the defendant has failed."

He warned though that there would be serious problems in taking away any rights of a rape defendant to defend himself because of obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights, which is shortly to be incorporated into British law.

"It is a difficult question. We have clearly decided in government we're not going to shoot from the hip".

At a recent case at Knightsbridge Crown Court in London, Judge Timothy Pontius jailed for 16 years a rapist who had "mercilessly" questioned his two victims in court. The judge

made it clear he was not punishing the rapist for the way he defended himself.

But he added it was "highly regrettable" that the law allowed an unrepresented defendant "virtually an unfettered right to personally question his victims in needlessly extended and agonising detail for the obvious purpose of intimidation and humiliation."

One of the victims had to give evidence twice about the intimate details of her ordeal after the first jury was discharged following a heated clash with the judge over his behaviour and attitude towards her. She later asked the judge: "Do I have to put up with this? I have never been so humiliated in my life."

In his interview, the Lord

Chancellor also hinted that the Government may consider setting up a "hardship" or "hard cases" fund as part of its legal reforms, in which ministers plan to remove legal aid for all civil actions involving damages claims. The legal profession, which claims the reforms will reduce access to justice for the poor, will see this as a welcome sign of compromise, but still insists the plans are being rushed through without proper consideration.

Too big for his boots? On page 19, Donald Macintyre speaks to Lord Irvine about a rumbustious and controversial few weeks for the man now described as "the second Cardinal Wolsey".

INSIDE TODAY

Give that woman undies (and get it right)

15/FASHION

... and give that woman a cigar

16/FEATURES

Treat yourself to a Damien Hirst ashtray for £120

THE EYE



Front Page News: The play's a hit

THE EYE

Disgusted Desert Storm heroes to hand back medals

British veterans of Operation Desert Storm are to make the ultimate gesture of their sense of betrayal at government inaction over Gulf War syndrome. Next month, dozens will go to the Ministry of Defence to hand back the medals they won serving Queen and country.

They were intended as symbols of heroism. Silver medals, bearing the airman's eagle, the sailor's anchor and the soldier's SA80 rifle, were issued to those who returned home victorious from war in the desert. The sandy stripe on the ribbon was a reference to the difficult terrain in which the 51,000 holders of the new Gulf War medal had risked their lives.

EXCLUSIVE
BY IAN BURRELL

But just as thousands of the returning troops have fallen ill or died since the war, so the medals themselves have lost their lustre: the badges of pride have become objects of loathing for many sick veterans.

Next month, in the most dramatic display of their anger since the end of the conflict, scores of veterans will converge on the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall to return their medals. The mass protest is believed to be unprecedented in the history of the armed forces and will underline the sense of abandonment felt by many of those who have become ill since serving in the war.

Their sense of isolation has been enhanced by their belief that the Government has abandoned Labour's pre-election promises that they would be fairly treat-

ed. Richie Turnbull, a Chester-based Royal Air Force veteran, said: "The MoD have betrayed us. Taken away our health and in some cases people's lives. They may as well also have the pride we had in our medals because we can't use them to pay our medical bills. The ministers may have changed but the civil servants responsible for the lies and disinformation are still there."

Since the idea of returning the medals was first mooted among veterans three days ago, 67 former Gulf troops have pledged to take part. Dozens more are expected to join the protest which is scheduled to coincide with next month's seventh anniversary of the start of the air war in the Gulf.

Members of both the Gulf Veterans Association and the National Gulf Veterans and Families Association will be handing back medals. The families of at least two dead veterans are also participating in the protest.

The veterans are demanding a full and independent inquiry into Gulf War illness and the way the MoD has handled the issue. They believe that an inquiry would improve their rights to war pensions and benefits and strengthen their legal claims for compensation. They say that 140 veterans have died since returning from the Gulf and up to 6,000 are now sick. Some 1,900 have registered for treatment with the official Medical Assessment Programme.

Sean Rusling, who was a paramedic with the 4th battalion, the Parachute Regiment, felt an overwhelming sense of achievement when he first received his medal. "I was very, very proud... There are people walking about today because I was able to give paramedical assistance to them." Mr Rusling, of Hull, is now sick, and feels the Government has failed him. "Such is my distress and sadness at the way the veterans have been treated that if it takes this gesture to make them sit up and think then we will throw the medals back at them."

Tony Flint, of London, who served as a medic with 205 General Hospital, said: "When I see my medal now I just feel anger because of the way we have been treated."



Lost pride: Veteran Richie Turnbull with the medals he intends to return Photograph: David Rose

TODAY'S NEWS

Election fraud charge

A warrant for the arrest of Mohammed Sarwar, Labour MP for Govan, has been issued on charges of election fraud. The charges relate to the alleged late registration of voters, attempts to pervert the course of justice and contraventions of the Representation of the People Act in connection with election expenses. Mr Sarwar is due to appear at Glasgow Sheriff Court today. Page 3

Sheffield wins sports HQ

Sheffield was named yesterday as the headquarters of the new United Kingdom Sports Institute. Up to £60m of Lottery money will be made available for the Sheffield project, which it is hoped will help Britain produce a new generation of world and Olympic champions across a wide range of sports. The plan involves Sheffield's two universities, two hospital trusts and the city council. Pages 26 and 28

Jail for IRA plotters

Three IRA men were jailed for a total of 62 years at the Old Bailey for plotting to launch a devastating lorry bomb attack in London. Patrick Kelly, Brian McHugh and James Murphy were convicted of conspiring to cause explosions between January and September last year. Security forces believed if successful, the planned assault would have matched last year's attack which destroyed Manchester city centre. The gang had access to many tons of explosives and was using a secure storage unit in north London as a bomb factory. Page 6

Williams team cleared

An Italian court yesterday cleared Frank Williams and five other defendants of the manslaughter of Ayrton Senna, the former world motor racing champion. The charges had been brought following Senna's death in a crash during the 1994

San Marino Grand Prix at Imola. The prosecution had argued that the accident followed modifications to the steering column in the Brazilian's Williams car. Motor racing officials, who had feared for the future of the sport in Italy if guilty verdicts had been returned, welcomed the judgment. Page 28

Mandela on the attack

Nelson Mandela yesterday addressed his African National Congress for the last time as its president. But the speech was not so much a farewell as a line drawn under the rainbow nation rhetoric that has endeared him to South Africans of all races and to the world outside.

He did not talk of racial harmony but instead mounted a concerted attack on white privilege. He also insisted that the "white-owned" media had been undermining the ANC revolution for too long, and it was time it transformed itself. Page 7

Just what you need for a Christmas break: Mediterranean sunshine.

There you are, feeling anything but Christmassy. Rain lashing down. Wind howling. Snow forecast. Then a friend hands you a glass of wine that shimmers in the firelight like sun on the water at St Tropez. James Herrick Chardonnay may not sound Mediterranean but as you raise the glass there's a rush of citrus and spice like the Mistral in your face. Then follows a flavour-tour of the South of France - wild thyme, vanilla, cloves, gooseberry, lemon, lime - till you can feel the warmth on your back and the blue Mediterranean between your toes. Stay awhile. Have another glass.

James Herrick

CHARDONNAY

1996

THE PICK OF THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

James Herrick CHARDONNAY

THE PICK OF THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

AVAILABLE COUNTRY WINE FROM SUPERMARKETS, SPECIALIST CHAINS AND MAJOR INDEPENDENT WINE MERCHANTS

2/BRIEFING

COLUMN ONE

A nation gripped as the First Dog gets a name

The president of the richest and most powerful nation in the world scheduled an end-of-political-term press conference yesterday to expatiate on such weighty matters as the expansion of Nato, the Asian financial crisis, the stand-off with Iraq, the scandals in his own Democratic Party, and the state of the planet in general. But, tape-recorders aloft, lenses trained, cellphones at the ready, there was only one thing we really wanted to know - we reporters, that is, and upwards of 150 million Americans - the name of THAT DOG.

For the past 10 days, ever since the unconfirmed report that First Cat Socks was no longer to have sole prowling rights at the White House, the American public has been transfixed and the media at action stations. After all, it is not every day that the leader of the free world switches from a one-cat policy to a twin-track pet policy.

Nor is the chosen beast just any dog. It is, note, not a common or garden labrador, but a "labrador-retriever cross". And it is certainly not, as you or I might say, brown, but "chocolate-coloured".

What is more, you had only to see the First Photo to realise that the President, never one to wear his heart elsewhere than on his sleeve, was besotted. He looked at it and held it meltingly, just the way he occasionally looks at Hillary, always looks at Chelsea, and might look (dare one say) at a cherished girlfriend, or a teddy bear. As the White House spokesman said of the first meeting: "Bonding occurred."

Since then, the chase has been on to find The Name. Every newspaper, television channel and Internet website worth its audience solicited contributions - but they hardly had to. The names were rolling in already: from Shoes and Sax (to pair with Socks), to Hershey, Nestlé and other chocolate derivatives, to Reno (after the attorney general criticised for appearing over-loyal to her boss). Less kindly souls offered Impooch. Scandal or - in reference to the Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives and Mr Clinton's one-time political sparring partner - Newt.

Television talkshows opened with dog quips. Television presenters not known for their soft touch offered home videos of their furry friends and reports from the front-line of Walkies to tutor the President in his new responsibilities. Thoroughly outflanked, the White House capitulated and invited suggestions from the nation. (You would have to be a political innocent to sniff at the 54 million votes represented by America's dog-owners, and Bill Clinton is hardly that.)

Still, though, the White House was in denial. As recently as Monday, the official spokesman insisted - *O tempora, o mores!* - that the President's new dog was not - repeat not - a media ploy: "He just wanted a dog". Pressed for the name, two White House spokesmen barked in chorus - "strictly not for attribution".

Still the drama was not over. Dangling White House reporters on the end of the First Lead, Mr Clinton told them (after trying to divert their attention by announcing a senior appointment that could sour his relations with Congress for months) that a name had been chosen at a family conference on Sunday. But no - well aware of how difficult it might be to attract a decent audience to an announcement about Nato in the last shopping week before Christmas - he would not announce it until Tuesday's press conference.

And the name? The presidential dog is called "Buddy", a friendly all-American name that also happened to belong to the President's recently deceased uncle, who bred and trained dogs for more than 50 years. Inevitably, the topic for last night's talkshows was what the great American public thought of the name. That's democracy for you.

— Mary Dejevsky, Washington

PEOPLE



Michael Parkinson: 'The talk show is like a successful dinner party'

Photograph: BBC

No gimmicks as plain-speaking Parky returns

He has never said so directly, but Michael Parkinson has always believed he was the "best bloody interviewer in the world" and next month he returns to the small screen in his long-awaited comeback series.

It has been 15 years since the silver-haired Yorkshireman hosted a chatshow, but the original format remains unchanged. He has promised a return to proper conversation with none of the gimmicks and endless plugs that have characterised similar shows in recent years.

"I have always believed the talk show is like a successful dinner party, where the viewer pulls up a chair and looks over my right shoulder at someone they always wanted to meet," he said.

Among the guests waiting to be grilled when the show returns on 9 January are Sir Anthony Hopkins, Barry Manilow and the comedian Paul Merton, whom Parkinson has said he rates as the funniest man alive. Elton John has also agreed to appear, as have Liam Neeson and Ewan McGregor.

The BBC approached Parkinson, 62, more than a year ago, after a succession of high-profile talk shows on all channels received a lukewarm reception. Parky

regularly attracted 12 million viewers to his programme between 1971 and 1982.

"They always say so-and-so is going to be the next Parkinson, but how can they be when they don't understand what I understand about the talk show?"

"For me the secret is being a good listener and I'm looking forward to the new series immensely." Parkinson, who started his career with the *Barnesley Chronicle*, said there was no difference between a reporter and an interviewer.

"It's the same job really. A talkshow host is a reporter. His job is to elicit answers and information from a guest. The only difference is the talk show host has to do it while tap dancing," he said.

His routine before a show will also remain unchanged. No alcohol the day before and always writing the name of his guest on a clipboard - just in case his mind goes blank. "I even wrote down Bing Crosby's name. It was a superstition ever since I couldn't remember John Wayne's name during a broadcast. I just kept thinking Duke. I knew it wasn't Duke Ellington but I couldn't think which Duke it was."

— Kate Watson-Smyth

UPDATE

POLICING

Not so tough on the causes of illness

Chief constables must take urgent action to reduce sickness absence in the police, which is the equivalent of 6,600 officers off every day in England and Wales, Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, said yesterday. The number of officers retiring on medical grounds - some of whom leave to avoid disciplinary action and to gain a larger pension, must also be cut, although the numbers are already declining.

As part of a package of measures to help dissuade frustrated officers from faking illness, police who want to leave should be offered careers advice and job placements, according to a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. The HMIC study, *Lost Time*, found that in the year to April 1997, more than 1.5 million working days were lost because of sick leave, at a cost of £210m a year.

The average number of sick days taken off each year by police officers and civilian staff is 12.5, compared to 8.4 days in a CBI survey, and 10.7 days for civil servants.

Mr Straw also said there could be no justification for some forces, such as Merseyside, attributing 77 per cent of their retirements to ill health, while the rate at other forces, such as Kent, was only 16 per cent.

"The report argues decisively that good management can have a dramatic effect on reducing these levels of sickness and medical retirement," he said.

— Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent



ENVIRONMENT

Water bills 'should be higher'

Nearly seven out of 10 consumers are willing to pay higher water bills to guarantee environmental improvements and adequate supplies, a study claims today. They are willing, on average, to stump up an extra £3.11 a month, according to the survey by NOP for the Environment Agency. Ninety-five per cent would rather see cash spent on "green" projects than have lower bills.

The study of 2,500 bill-payers in England and Wales was carried out as part of the agency's contribution to the forthcoming review of water company prices. It showed that 86 per cent of customers regard the quality of water in rivers and seas as very important and that 96 per cent want to see money spent on ensuring a reliable water supply.

TRAVEL

Dreaming of a sunny Christmas

More than one in three Britons would love to go abroad for Christmas but fewer than one in six have ever done so, says a survey published today.

As many as 49 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds would prefer a foreign Christmas, according to the survey from Barclays Travel Shop Direct.

Londoners are most likely to travel abroad during the festive season and Scots the least likely. Most of those who fancy foreign climes at Christmas do so to get away from the British weather.

The survey found that 37 per cent of people overall would like to go away for Christmas, but only 16 per cent had ever been on holiday during the festive season.

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.42	Italy (lira)	2,765
Austria (schillings)	19.74	Japan (yen)	210.99
Belgium (francs)	58.08	Malta (lira)	0.62
Canada (\$)	2.26	Netherlands (guilders)	3.16
Cyprus (pounds)	0.82	Norway (kroner)	11.59
Denmark (kroner)	10.77	Portugal (escudos)	285.44
France (francs)	9.40	Spain (pesetas)	237.06
Germany (marks)	2.81	Sweden (kroner)	12.37
Greece (drachmai)	446.7	Switzerland (francs)	2.28
Hong Kong (\$)	12.26	Turkey (lira)	316,100
Ireland (punts)	1.08	USA (\$)	1.59

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

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ZITS

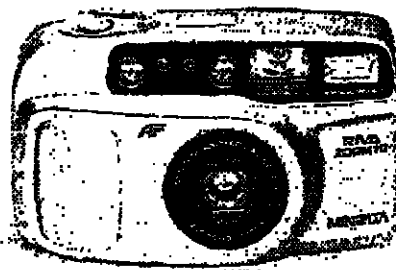
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by Chris Priestley

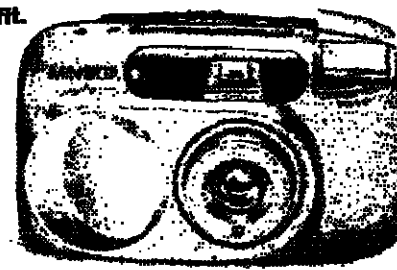


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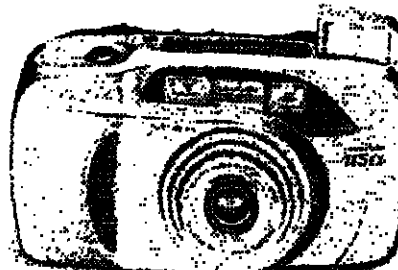
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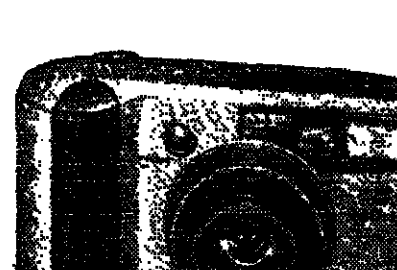
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MINOLTA

Smokers go on TV to tell us why they are dying

It took three heart attacks at the age of 31 to persuade Sylvester Khokhar to stop smoking. Now he is to tell a nationwide television audience how his world fell apart. Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor, reports on a new style of anti-smoking campaign.

"No one wants me any more. I have got my whole life in front of me and employers don't want to know me. When I go for a job interview they say fine but when they look at my medical record they say 'no thank you'."

After 18 months without work since his illness struck, Sylvester Khokhar's future is bleak. The heart attacks that nearly took his life have taken his livelihood and his hopes. Married with three children he is now dependent on his wife, Gloria, 34.

Mr Khokhar, a former factory worker, has given up smoking, changed his diet and started walking instead of using the car. But it is too late to save his career. "I have learnt my lesson in a very hard way. I don't want to see others get hurt in the way I did. I'm lucky to be alive - I had three heart attacks in three days. I tell my three kids if they smoke they may pay with their lives."

Mr Khokhar's bitter experience is featured in a new £2.5m television advertising campaign to run for three months from Boxing Day.

Designed to shock, it shows real life stories of smokers who have suffered serious illness as a result of their habit. Tracey, 36, has lung cancer which has spread to her brain and glands. David, 50, has emphysema, the lung condition that restricts breathing.

Research published by the Health Education Authority, which commissioned the advertisements, shows that almost two out of three school pupils who smoke regularly

think they are no more likely to get lung cancer compared with others of their own age.

Mr Khokhar said: "When you are young you don't think far. Young people are sitting ducks for cigarette advertisers and drug pushers. I want to wake them up and bring them to their senses. I hope anyone who sees these ads will think twice before taking a puff."

A survey by the Office for National Statistics published yesterday shows that young teenagers think many more adults and children smoke than actually do. More than a quarter thought that all or most people of their own age smoked although the actual proportion is one in eight.

Non-smokers are under social pressure to smoke. The survey found more than a third had been offered a cigarette in the last six months. Smokers tend to keep their habit secret. Six out of ten thought their parents did not know they smoked.

A spokeswoman for the Health Education Authority said: "The people in our new television ads are graphic examples of the pain and suffering caused by smoking. They are still young and they face serious illness and possibly death because they smoked."

The Government was caused further embarrassment over its decision to exempt Formula One motor racing for 10 years from its proposed ban on tobacco sponsorship after findings from the Office for National Statistics survey showed it was the sport most firmly linked in young people's minds with smoking.

More than one in three teenagers connected cigarette sponsorship with motor racing compared with one in four who linked it with snooker, one in six with cricket and one in seven with rugby. However, more than one in four also connected it with football, which does not employ tobacco sponsorship. Almost all young teenagers said they had seen cigarette advertising in the last six months, most on billboards and in magazines.



Sylvester Khokhar: 'I have learnt my lesson in a very hard way ... I tell my kids if they smoke they may pay with their lives'

Photograph: Tom Pilston

WHY FATHERS' CIGARETTES MAY BE CAUSING CHILDHOOD CANCER

One in seven childhood cancers may be due to the father smoking cigarettes before the baby is conceived. New research links 14 per cent of cancers among children aged under 16, including leukaemia and bone cancers, to paternal smoking and suggests that smoking by the mother is not responsible.

According to a report in the *British Journal of Cancer*

sperm may be damaged by the father smoking, resulting in genetic mutations being passed on.

The team that carried out the research looked at the smoking habits of the parents of 2,587 children who died of cancer and compared them to a similar size control group.

"Maternal daily consumption of cigarettes and paternal use of pipes or cigars were unim-

portant, but there was a statistically significant trend between paternal consumption of cigarettes and the risk of childhood cancer. About 14 per cent of childhood cancers in this series could be attributable to paternal smoking," says the report.

It adds: "The smoking of cigarettes by mothers can, with some confidence, be excluded as an important risk

factor for the generality of childhood cancer."

It is the toxic elements of the inhaled cigarette smoke which are suspected of causing the damage. "Cigarette smoke contains a high concentration of oxidants ... If unchecked, oxidants can cause considerable damage to DNA and these reactive mutagens have been shown to be involved in a variety of physio-

logical processes, including cancer."

At what stage the sperm may be damaged is not known. The complete spermatogenesis process takes 74 days and at any time during that period it could be mutated, but earlier smoking might also be implicated.

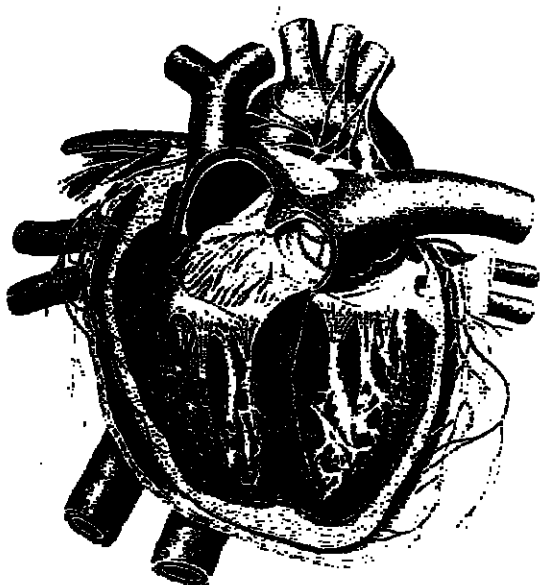
One of the authors, Dr Tom Sorahan of the Institute of Occupational Health at

Birmingham University said yesterday: "The theory based on the latest research is that the DNA is damaged by the smoke. We know that smoking can cause cancer in many parts of the body and the toxic chemicals in the smoke are circulating throughout the body. Latest work shows that it is getting to the sperm and damaging it."

— Roger Dobson

Doubts over value of bypass surgery could transform coronary care

Coronary bypass surgery — the commonest operation for heart disease — does not extend life, according to a study. Jeremy Laurance asks whether the surgical success story of the 1970s and 1980s is set to decline.



Heart bypass surgery costs the NHS about £275m a year

Long-term results of coronary bypass surgery are "disappointing" and the operation may have been overused, an expert in heart problems said yesterday.

Dr John Irving, consultant cardiologist at St John's Hospital in Livingston, West Lothian, said patients and relatives tended to believe that the operation would prolong life when it was unlikely to do so. Patients treated with drugs alone survived longer although severe symptoms, such as angina (chest pain), were better treated with surgery.

A study of 102 of Dr Irving's patients who were operated on in the mid-1980s by eight dif-

ferent surgeons and followed for 10 years, published in the journal *Heart*, found a third had died, half of them aged between 40 and 59. Among those who survived, 40 per cent either had angina recur or underwent another operation.

Dr Irving said: "I do think

the operation has been overused. It is also expensive at £11,000 a time and patients still need drugs.

"Medical treatment may be as effective and costs only an extra £500 on drugs. That is a big saving."

The operation which was

pioneered in the 1970s, involves stripping out the tiny arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle when they have become clogged with fatty deposits as a result of heart disease, and replacing them with veins taken from the leg or chest wall.

It is effective at relieving symptoms of chest pain but the new veins tend to clog up and collapse like the old ones over time. Around 25,000 operations a year are carried out at a cost of £275m.

The number of bypass operations has started to fall as worries about cost have grown, and there has been greater use of angioplasty, an alternative technique in which the coronary arteries are widened using a balloon attached to a catheter introduced via a vein in the groin.

The British Heart Foundation said the symptoms of heart disease could be debilitating and bypass surgery was effective at alleviating them. New drug treatments developed in the last 10 years meant doctors were now more selective about choosing patients for surgery. "Longevity may not be the only factor," the spokesman said.

NHS accused of letting patients suffer

The president of the Royal College of Anaesthetists yesterday accused health authorities and NHS trusts of failing to take patients' suffering seriously.

Leo Strumlin, professor of anaesthetics at the Royal London Hospital, said managers were failing to provide the funds and the leadership necessary to ensure that proper pain relief was available in hospitals.

"What is required is a commitment to do it and the wherewithal to do it. Pain goes away — that is the problem. Many health authorities and trusts do not see it as a quality issue," he said.

Professor Strumlin was responding to an Audit Commission report, published today, which says that the amount of pain suffered by patients depends on the hospital in which they are treated.

The report, *Anaesthesia under Examination*, which was leaked on Monday to *The Independent*, says hospitals with acute pain control teams — specially trained staff who assess and treat patients' pain — have been shown to reduce suffering but only 57 per cent of hospitals have them.

Professor Strumlin said: "Some NHS trusts don't think there is any value in these teams. They seem to think it is not a problem if things are done the way they have always been done."

The Patients' Association yesterday launched a campaign to put patients in control of their pain relief.

Claire Rayner, its chairman, said: "The British stiff upper lip really does exist in terms of our tendency to suffer in silence when in pain."

"Our campaign will focus on ensuring

that both patients and health professionals have access to up-to-date information on pain management."

The Audit Commission report also found that despite a 41 per cent growth in the number of consultant anaesthetists over the past 10 years, demand still outstrips supply. Half of trusts reported a shortage of consultants with an average of 13 per cent of posts vacant.

One in five trusts had been unable to compensate for these shortages — making it more difficult to schedule operations, offer epidurals to mothers in labour or staff pain clinics.

The report says the health service should consider training nurse anaesthetists to work alongside consultants to ease the workload.

— Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor

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BT It's good to talk

Mandela attacks white privilege and free press

Nelson Mandela's last speech to the ANC as its president marked a sharp contrast with the rainbow nation rhetoric that has won over the world. Our correspondent watched a defining political moment at the party's 50th national conference in Mafikeng, as the powerful influence of his chosen successor became apparent.

What was surprising was the harsh tone which accompanied the change - with an uncompromising stream of attacks on whites, "white parties" and the "white-owned media" - and the fact that the warm and cuddly President Mandela, not Thabo Mbeki, his much-vilified successor, used his last speech as party leader to lead the seathing, and for him unprecedented, assault.

Could this be the same man that took tea with Betsy Verwoerd, ageing widow of the architect of apartheid - a reconciliation too far in the eyes of some party members? Coming from President Mandela the change in tone could not have been more stark. At first it was assumed that while it was Mr Mandela's lips that were moving Mr Mbeki, sitting a few feet away, was ventriloquist-style, doing the talking.

At every turn, according to President Mandela, the ANC was being thwarted by those "committed to the maintenance of white privilege". The proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the body charged with exposing the atrocities of the apartheid years, showed "the unwillingness of white society in general, including white politicians, business, the judiciary, the media and the church, to explain its involvement in the maintenance and perpetuation of the apartheid system".

That betrayed white society's



Old guard, young pretender: Nelson Mandela, right, conferring with his deputy, Thabo Mbeki, at the beginning of the ANC's 50th general conference in Mafikeng yesterday. Mr Mandela is to give up his presidency of the ANC in favour of Mr Mbeki.

Photograph: AP

speech came from a frustrated presidential heart. Three years on, the president was dismayed at white indifference in redressing past injustices. "He has been saying these things for months in private," said the commentator.

But the president was surely trying also to satisfy disillusioned elements in the party. In its 85-year history, the ANC has probably never been more divided. Three years after taking power it has yet to transform itself from broad-church revolutionary movement to political party.

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the president's former wife, shared the platform with him and the ANC executive yesterday. Almost seated in the wings, she could not have been placed further from her ex-husband.

Mrs Mandela, accused during TRC hearings of involvement in eight murders, is expected to seek nomination this week, despite the ANC leadership's best efforts, for the ANC deputy presidency. Her attacks on a leadership - considered far from radical by the grassroots - have struck a chord in some quarters.

After Mr Mandela's speech his former wife joined the queue of well-wishers to offer congratulations. Nelson and Winnie smiled broadly as they embraced briefly but warmly amid crowds of supporters who sang and danced around them.

hostility to the new democratic South Africa, he argued. Mr Mandela has spent a large part of his presidency wooing truculent right-wing Afrikaners to the new political dispensation. But yesterday he had harsh words for them too. "They [Afrikaners] continue to be imprisoned by notions of white supremacy and of supposed Afrikaner interests that are separate and opposed to the interests of the rest of the population."

Faced with deep divisions within the ANC, the president sought to blame everything from crime to the slow pace of

social change on white resistance. He labelled the opposition National Party and Democratic Party "reactionaries", dedicated to preserving white privilege. But he reserved his most seathing comments for the white-owned media - a source of irritation to the president from time to time but Mr Mbeki's enduring pet hate.

The media, he insisted, were deliberately trying to undermine the ANC revolution. "During the last three years it has become perfectly clear that the bulk of the mass media in our country has set itself up as a force opposed to the ANC."

He seemed irritated by the press's desire for a real opposition to the ANC to emerge. He said the media, like white parties, were wrong in portraying South Africa

as a mature democracy. "We are still involved in the delicate process of nursing the new-born baby into a state of adulthood," he said. Some might have remembered, with a shudder, the early years of independence in Zimbabwe, South Africa's northern neighbour. Robert Mugabe, then in-

ternationally popular, described the foundations of democracy as luxuries a new country could not afford.

The onslaught on the press resurrected the spectre of a future "independent" regulatory body for the media which might pronounce on everything from what is newsworthy to what constitutes public interest. Close associates of Mr Mbeki have been floating that kite for months. Last week, Mr Mbeki again raised the idea of gov-

ernment information bulletins being broadcast on national television.

None of these suggestions has been embraced by the media. Mr Mandela said yesterday that in order to protect privileges which found their roots in the apartheid era, the media denounced "all efforts to ensure its own transformation ... as an attack on press freedom".

The attacks on the press and on whites were loudly applauded by the thousands of ANC delegates who travelled to Mafikeng in the North-west province yesterday for the first day of a five-day conference.

BY MARY BRAID

Mbeki the bogeyman emerges from behind the throne to take the reins

Thabo Mbeki this week takes over from President Nelson Mandela as leader of the ANC, the penultimate step in his almost certain ascent to the presidency of South Africa. Mary Braid asks whether a living saint is making way for a Machiavelli par excellence.

The respected *Mail and Guardian* newspaper summed it up rather well. We are about to be ruled by a man we do not know, it observed in a scene-setting piece for this week's hand-over of power at the African National Congress's 50th national conference.

As President Nelson Mandela, 79, passes the ANC leadership to his deputy Thabo Mbeki, 55, just 16 months before the next general election, the country's post-apartheid history enters a new era.

The transition from Madiba (the family name by which President Mandela is affectionately known) to Mbeki was always going to be a delicate stage in an already precarious process. Filling the warm, saint-

ly and charismatic Madiba's shoes is an unenviable task. It is not helped when the public feels it is trading a fleshed out, lovable demi-god for a mysterious matchstick man.

The diminutive Mr Mbeki, always beautifully turned out but oh so dull to listen to, is already the bogeyman of the white liberal dinner party. The rumours about him are legion, and often malicious. It is said that he has risen to the top of the ANC since its unbanning in 1990, by plotting the downfall of all political rivals and opponents. Add to schemer, the title tormentor of whites. For, ironically, the man who was once criticised as being too cosy with whites is now billed as their future persecutor.

The facts - sparse as they are - are these. Mr Mbeki is a member of the Struggle aristocracy. His father, Govan, an early ANC leader, was imprisoned with President Mandela on Robben Island. The ANC sent Thabo Mbeki to Britain where he took a masters degree in economics at Sussex University. He later went to the Soviet Union for military training. During 28 years in exile he pressed the ANC's case all over the world. He is credited with masterminding the international sanctions campaign against

apartheid South Africa, and he gained diplomatic experience, connections and an urbane, sophisticated, intellectual image.

Beyond this, much is conjecture. After the ANC's unbanning, the exile group rose at the expense of those who battled for freedom at home. Mr Mbeki is blamed for the recent departure from politics of popular "home" leader, Cyril Ramaphosa, who led the ANC in the negotiations which ended white minority rule. Some also claim that he plotted the fall of popular party figures Tokyo Sexwale and Terror Lekota.

The time for President Mandela's inspired acts of reconciliation is over. The ANC, he argues, must now meet its promises to the millions of blacks still languishing at the bottom of the social heap. That puts the wind up those still sitting pretty at the top.

What should worry people most is Mr Mbeki's hostility towards the press. It is doubtful that he really accepts the importance of a free press in a democracy.

If Mr Mbeki's politics are largely unknown, his private life is a complete mystery. He married Zanele in 1974. They have no children, but a son from a previous relationship disappeared in the Eighties.



An artist's view of Boers at war Photograph: Hulton Getty

Boer war siege that gripped the nation

The history of the town was so dramatic, in British eyes, that its name even entered the English language - if in somewhat distorted form. "Mafeking, v:z" is officially defined in the dictionaries as "to rejoice with hysterical boisterousness".

Mafeking was the name the English colonists gave to Mafikeng - literally "place of stones", a town in the dusty, sparsely populated northern Cape. Now, it is the capital of the Northwest Province of South Africa. But at the time of the Boer War, Mafeking was a small town divided into an African town of about 7,500 residents and a "white" settlement of about 1,350.

Mafeking had been used as the base for the Jameson Raid - an unsuccessful raid by the British colonists against the

Dutch-speaking Boer republic of Transvaal. Although the raid failed it was part of the build-up to the Boer War which was fought between Britain and the Transvaal and the Orange Free State between 1899 and 1902.

The total British military strength reached half a million, whereas the Boers could muster less than 90,000. But the British were fighting in hostile territory over difficult terrain. The Boers besieged Mafeking, Ladysmith and Kimberley during "Black Week", in December 1899. But with the landing of more British troops the fortunes of the war turned. The British relieved the besieged towns. There were street parties in London at the news of the relief of Mafeking on 17 May 1900, after 217 days under siege.

— Fiona Bell

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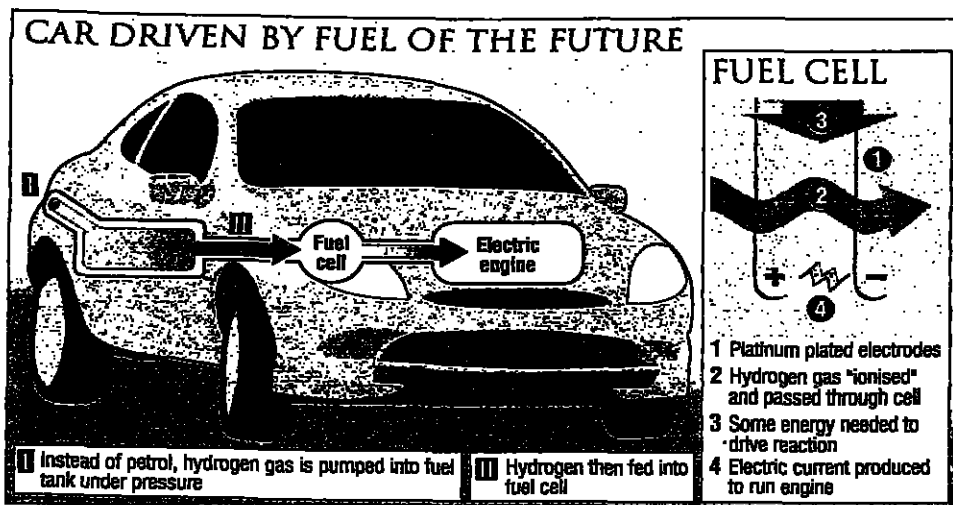
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Hydrogen power could spell end for the petrol engine



Car-makers believe the end of the age of the petrol engine is in sight. Randeep Ramesh, Transport Correspondent, examines the chances of hydrogen becoming the fuel of the future

There seems to be little to be gained for Britain's most popular car-maker to be predicting the demise of its most cherished product - the petrol engine. But in committing nearly £250m to developing hydrogen-fuelled

cars, it is exactly what Ford's chairman is saying.

"We view fuel cells one of the most important technologies for the early 21st century," said Sir Alex Trotman. Ford and Daimler Benz - owners of Mercedes - signed a deal earlier this week to pour millions of pounds into a programme to develop a car which runs on the electricity generated by a reaction between hydrogen and oxygen.

The only by-products, claim its developers, from this "fuel cell" are water and tiny amounts of carbon dioxide. The expertise is being developed by Canadian company Ballard Power Systems - which

despite making many major breakthroughs has yet to make a profit in a decade.

Motor manufacturers have no real choice in taking this road. With oil supplies running out, action to stop global warming as well as politicians mooting taxes to unclog city streets and stem urban pollution, car makers are being pushed to come up with novel solutions.

Sir Alex has been to see Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, to try and convince him that there is no need to tax the motorist out of the driving seat. At the opening of a new £123m environmental research plant at Dunton, Sir Alex said he was

"seriously worried" when John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister and the minister in charge of transport, had called for the end of the two-car family.

The Ford chairman said he saw nothing conflicting in Ford's claim to be both green and pro-car. Sir Alex went on: "I don't think it's productive to demonise the car. People are not going to get out of their cars. We have to make these cars as customer and environmentally-friendly as we can and in a way that does not damage the economy."

It is clear Sir Alex would prefer that Mr Blair follows the US

approach. President Clinton's Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles has seen big car manufacturers fund "blue skies" engine technologies. The partnership influenced California's Air Resources Board to relax plans that would force manufacturers to sell electric vehicles last year.

But the science is some way off reaching the consumer. Mercedes claims some success: it has a running prototype of a fuel cell powered A-class urban car and hopes to produce a four-seat version by 2005. To date, the project has cost Mercedes and Ballard nearly £200m each.

Government steps up campaign to cull badgers

About 10,000 badgers will be slaughtered over the next five years in the Government's latest effort to stop them spreading tuberculosis among cattle. But, says Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent, experts believe developing a vaccine offers the best hope of ending the scourge.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food intends to embark on a huge new experiment in culling badgers, to see how effective eradication is in stopping the spread of cattle tuberculosis.

In one-third of the worst-affected areas of Britain, every badger will be trapped and killed, including mothers giving milk to their cubs. Under the current, discredited, slaughter policy, lactating sows are spared. In another third of these "hot spot" areas, the badgers will be left alone - even if TB cases in cattle are rising. And in the final third, badgers will only be killed on a farm after cattle there contract TB.

The experiment will cover at least 30 squares, each measuring about 10km by 10km - or some 40 square miles. They will cover most of the farms that have had the worst problems with cattle TB. Elsewhere, the policy of slaughtering badgers

to control the disease will stop for the five-year experiment.

Farming minister Jeff Rooker said the Government accepted these recommendations from an expert, independent panel yesterday, although there would be two months of consultation before they were implemented.

"Next to BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy], this is the most serious issue we have to deal with," he said. The panel and the Government want to find ways of making farmers contribute more towards ending cattle TB. "They already pay now through the failure of current policy," Mr Rooker said.

Exactly how badgers pass the disease to cattle is not known, and other species can also harbour bovine tuberculosis. But, said ecologist Professor John Krebs, chairman of the expert panel, "the badger is a significant reservoir - you'd have to be perverse not to accept that".

The MAFF began gassing sets of badgers, a protected species, in 1975 in the worst affected areas but this was suspended seven years later because of an outcry over the cruelty involved. Current policy is to kill badgers on a farm where there is a TB outbreak in cattle if there is good reason to believe that the infection came from badgers. They are lured into cages with bait, then killed instantly with a pistol shot.

But the incidence of cattle TB keeps on rising - which is why the previous government commissioned an inquiry by Professor Krebs' panel. While only one in



Night watch: The MAFF is to extend the killing of badgers beyond farms with TB outbreaks

Photograph: Planet Earth

every 250 British cattle herds has an outbreak each year, in the West Country, the West Midlands, and South Wales the disease is much more common. Within these regions there are local hot spots where outbreaks are even more frequent.

Diseased cows have to be

slaughtered, while animals cannot be bought for or sold from an affected herd. About 400 herds are covered by restriction orders at any one time. The ministry spends £16m a year on research, killing badgers, compensating farmers and trying to control the disease.

The Krebs committee said that over the past 20 years, the ministry has never conducted proper experiments to find out how culling can actually work. The trial it advocates would not kill any more badgers over the next five years than the current policy. Professor Krebs said,

That was many fewer than are killed on the road each year. As for Government, it should boost its spending on research well above the current £1.7m a year. A cattle vaccine needs to be developed, but that is likely to take more than 10 years and will be difficult.

World suffers the worst year ever for forest fires

A leading conservation group claims that this year has seen the most destructive forest fires in recorded history. Nicholas Schoon explains the claim from the World Wide Fund for Nature.

"1997 will be remembered as the year the world caught fire," said Jean-Paul Jeanrenaud, head of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) International's forest programme.

In Indonesia and Brazil alone, more than 5 million hectares of species-rich woodland habitat have been consumed by fire - an area about as large as Switzerland, says a report from the organisation. But there have been serious fires on every continent apart from Antarctica, with the latest striking the east coast of Australia at the beginning of this month.

Many of these fires are started deliberately, and often illegally, to clear land for agriculture and plantations. In some countries they have become massive and uncontrollable because of drought attributed to this year's El Niño, a global weather event which occurs every few years and this time appears extreme.

The fires have caused air pollution levels much higher and more dangerous than those for which traffic, industry and power stations are responsible. They are also adding significantly to the emissions of global-warm-

ing carbon dioxide gas which come from burning fossil fuels.

"We are creating a vicious cycle of destruction, where increased fires are both a result of changes in weather and a contributory factor to these changes," said Mr Jeanrenaud.

WWF says the fires in Indonesia may have set light to thick peat deposits which could smoulder underground for years and start new surface fires during the next dry season.

Hundreds of infant orang-utans in Indonesia have been found in the hands of villagers, available for the pet trade. It is believed their mothers fled from the burning forests with their babies and were then killed by local people. Meanwhile, the government has reinstated 45 or the 146 timber exploitation permits it revoked in the wake of the catastrophic forest fires this year.

The WWF report says that in the Amazon jungles of Brazil says there has been a 50 per cent increase in the number of fires in this year's burning season, which begins in August, compared with that of 1996.

The Brazilian government says the great bulk of these fires are taking place on cleared land or in secondary forest which had already been burnt. But WWF does not accept that the big increase is not destroying more virgin forest areas.

Other countries cited in the report as having had severe forest fires are Papua New Guinea, Colombia, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda.

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December

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26

December

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New Year's Day

1

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Parents wage war against 'cyberbooze'

The national Christmas tree is lit, the strains of 'Jingle Bells' are in the air and the season of good cheer is well under way. Just the time, then, for America's sobriety lobby to warn about the dire combination of youth, computers and drink. Mary Dejevsky reports from Washington on the gathering campaign against 'cyberbooze' and what lies behind it.

Middle America may be very clear about what it is for: God, America and apple pie. But it is equally clear about what it is against, and high on that list is alcohol, especially when drunk by minors.

The very thought that thousands of teenagers may be logging on to their computers and ordering alcohol over the Internet - let alone taking delivery of the stuff and drinking it,

is almost as terrifying to their parents and the public at large as the possibility that they might be exposed to Internet pornography along the way. To some, it is worse.

To combat this threat from "cyberbooze", a new alliance has sprung on to the already crowded lobbying scene. Americans for Responsible Alcohol Access (ARAA), is headed by the attorney-general of New York state, Dennis Vacco. He recently mounted a "sting" which netted a dozen or more firms for allegedly dispatching drink to juveniles.

The group lambasts "Internet hooligans" who, it says, are bypassing state laws by selling wine and beer to all comers, without checking their age. The companies, however, ask how rigorous they can reasonably be.

Ordering wine or beer on the Internet in the United States is no more complicated than ordering a book or a plane ticket. A dozen or more easily accessible websites with names like Beer Across America, Virtual Vineyards, Wines from the West, tout their wares alongside



Summer daze: Lobbyists in the US have stepped up their campaign against drinking among under-age teenagers, who can now order their beer via the Internet

Photograph: American Gruffiti

sites advertising gourmet foods, chocolates and flowers.

Some companies require on-screen registration before processing the order; others provide an age box to tick. Most say they check the identity of the recipient when the goods are delivered - but watchful neighbours say delivery firms just leave the boxes on doorsteps. In practice, if a juvenile has his own (or a parent's)

credit card number and ticks the age box, there is little to stop him ordering, and receiving, whatever takes his fancy.

But this seemingly simple - if undesirable - state of affairs, where 12 year-olds can order crates of beer by computer, conceals several layers of special interests. Internet vendors contend that very few juveniles order alcohol. They also charge

that the ARAA, which is partly funded by liquor wholesalers, is using the issue of under-age drinking to protect vested interests: the interests of the states (which control liquor licences and taxation) and those of the traditional wholesalers - both of which stand to lose their cut if Internet trade expands.

All the forecasts suggest it will. Not only is buying by com-

puter convenient, especially for those who live outside major centres or in the many "dry" counties of the central and southern United States, but it is also financially advantageous to buy where state tax is low or nil.

Last summer, a group of mail order companies reached agreement with the state authorities to try to close the sales loophole, but the effort came to nothing:

a consumer outcry quashed it. With alcohol sales, some states have tried to protect their income, or their "dry" laws, by banning mail and computer orders. But it is easier said than done.

Nor is the legal drinking age quite as clearly defined as it seems. Since 1988, following a series of drink-driving deaths publicised by the highly effective lobby group, Mothers

Against Drunk Drivers (Madd), the majority of US states have raised the legal drinking age from 18 to 21. This has created a situation where young men and women who have attained the legal age of majority, who may vote, marry, take out a mortgage and command a battery of credit cards, break the law if they buy a beer or drink a glass of wine in public.

The higher drinking age found public favour in a country where the shadow of Prohibition still looms. But it is often flouted. This autumn, there was shock over the death from "binge" drinking of a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. And the drink-related deaths since then of five students in Virginia prompted the state's attorney general, Richard Cullen, to ask whether a lower legal drinking age might encourage more responsible drinking.

● A spokeswoman for Tesco yesterday said that when people use its Internet service to buy wine, they must use either an ordinary credit card or a Tesco credit card and the holder of such cards must be 18 or over.

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GI Jane and GI Joe don't mix, says Pentagon military inquiry

A high-powered civilian panel commissioned by the Pentagon to consider mixed-sex training in the US armed forces has concluded that the practice has harmed discipline and lowered standards. Mary Dejevsky, in Washington, reports on the reversals of a controversial policy

The 11-member panel, chaired by former Republican Senator, Nancy Kassebaum Baker, interviewed more than 2,000 recruits, drill instructors and supervisors. As well as calling for a return to separate basic training, it proposed the formation of all-women training units.

Accepting criticism voiced by some officers and recruits that mixed training had lowered standards, the panel demanded tougher training and fitness requirements, with "consistent" standards for male and female recruits. There should also be improved instruction on "how males and females should relate to each other professionally", it said, but current "no talk, no touch" guidelines should be abolished. The panel's report also recommended severe punishments for those

guilty of making false accusations of sexual harassment or misconduct.

It did not, however, advocate the complete ending of mixed training. Men and women would still spend up to 70 per cent of their time in mixed units, once basic training was complete. Training has been fully mixed in the army and navy for the past four years, and in the air force since the Seventies. Only the Marines stood out against the policy and continues to train male and female recruits separately, a policy which now appears vindicated.

The Defence Secretary, William Cohen, who is a staunch supporter of mixed training in the armed forces, said he was launching a six-month consultation period on the report's findings before making a decision.

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Bare bones: William Hague (right) and his agriculture spokesman Michael Jack (left) at Smithfield market, London yesterday

Cunningham comes under attack from all sides

The Government's plan to ban beef on the bone had degenerated into complete shambles, it was claimed yesterday. Kim Sengupta and Fran Abrams see the new law come under fierce attack on its very first day.

It is not the first time that a minister's reputation had foundered on a food scare, as Edwina Currie could have told Jack Cunningham. Yesterday, the Agriculture Minister was facing scathing criticism of his handling of the latest episode of the BSE crisis from virtually all sides.

Some butchers openly declared they would flout the new law and continue to supply beef on the bone to customers who demand it. Environmental health officers who are supposed to police the errant butchers said the law could be "virtually

impossible to enforce". The farmers blame Dr Cunningham for damaging their livelihoods and have burned his effigy at protests.

Yesterday, the minister flew back from Brussels into a gathering storm. He was also facing trouble with the European Union over his decision to ban beef imports which do not meet Britain's highest standards. Euro MPs are pressing for immediate legal action against Britain, arguing that one member state cannot invoke trade sanctions against others without the approval of Brussels.

In Britain, some butchers are determined to test and break the regulations. Ray Robinson of Burntwood, Walsall yesterday sold three T-bone steaks. He said he was prepared to be prosecuted rather than stop selling cuts on the bone.

Mr Robinson, 71, said: "This is not about money - I am fighting for a principle and I am prepared to go to court for the principle. I think it is taking personal liberty away to tell people what they can or cannot eat."

Many butchers are "storing" the banned cuts already paid for by the customers to be collected later. Under the new law, this is illegal. But Paul Hambling, from Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire declared: "If that's the case, then it is just too bad. I have got around 25 orders which have been paid for and will be collected for Christmas."

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health told the Commons' Agriculture Committee yesterday that even if its members found illegal beef on sale they would probably not be able to prosecute.

The only sure method of securing evidence for a conviction would be if an inspector was sold such meat, and this was "negligible".

Ann Goodwin, the institute's Assistant Secretary said: "The regulations are a recipe for confusion and inconsistency" and officials complained they had not been "anything like adequately consulted" by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food over the drafting of the law.

Wage Bill pushed ahead as Whitehall accused of low pay

The Government Bill to introduce the minimum wage was given a second reading in the Commons last night amid claims that some Whitehall departments were guilty of low payment to staff. Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent, says some Whitehall workers get as little as £3.17 an hour.

Workers across Whitehall are being paid rates below the expected figure for the minimum wage, according to ministerial replies which were given as the legislation to stamp out low pay began its passage through the Commons.

The Commons replies to David Chidgey, a Liberal Democrat spokesman, showed that 1,351 full-time employees earn between £3.17 and £4.39 an hour at the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.

The Lord Chancellor's office under Lord Irvine employs 202 full-time staff on hourly rates ranging from £3.30 to £3.50.

About 25 full time staff at the Department of Education and Employment earn £3.59 an hour.

The numbers of workers who are earning low pay are small, but the fact that low pay exists in Whitehall was being used by supporters of the low pay legislation as a lever to seek a higher minimum wage.

The Department of Health employs 106 full-time members of staff who are paid an hourly rate of £3.65, while 15 are paid between £3.66 and £3.75 an hour and 23 are paid up to £4.

Mr Chidgey said the figures showed that the introduction of a minimum wage could increase the Whitehall pay bill by £1.5m. While his estimate is open to question, it does not include the thousands on low pay in the NHS hospitals.

The Liberal Democrats will be seeking to amend the Bill during its committee stage to allow greater flexibility, but Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, insisted that the minimum wage should be applied as a national rate.

The figure will be recommended to the Government next May by the Low Pay Commission.

John Redwood, the Conservative spokesman for Trade and Industry, led the Tories in opposing the Bill as an attack on jobs. He said the hotel and catering industries estimated that 90,000 jobs would go in their area if the minimum wage were fixed at £4.26 an hour, and it would amount to 1 million job losses in the UK as a whole.

"The main winner from a minimum wage in the private sector will be the Treasury. The main losers will be those young, unskilled or disabled people looking for their first jobs," he said.



Margaret Beckett insists on a national minimum wage

Robinson faces official complaint

A formal complaint was lodged yesterday with Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, about Geoffrey Robinson's non-disclosure of his interest in an offshore family trust.

Peter Lilley, the shadow Chancellor, said in a letter to Sir Gordon yesterday that he understood trusts did not always have close links with their beneficiaries.

But he argued that the connection between the Paymaster General and the Orion Trust was particularly close because of Mr Robinson's alleged influence over its share-buying decisions.

One Labour source said last night that if Sir Gordon ruled that trusts should be registered by MPs, there would be no problem for Mr Robinson - because everybody knew about his trust now - but he said that such a ruling could force Conservative MPs to expose any trusts

that they might currently be the beneficiaries of.

In his submission to Sir Gordon, Mr Lilley cited a statement made by the minister's solicitors last week; that Mr Robinson had no influence over the trust - something that had been contradicted in weekend newspaper interviews.

Mr Lilley also asked Sir Gordon if he would go beyond his Commons remit, and examine "the apparent conflict of interest between the Paymaster's links with the Orion Trust and his ministerial responsibility for policy towards the taxation of such trusts".

Sir Gordon has already told Mr Lilley that he is unable to do that, as that is a matter for the Prime Minister - who has already ruled that Mr Robinson has done no wrong, there is no conflict of interest, and that as far as he is concerned, that is the end of the matter.

— Anthony Bevins



Jason was eight when his parents were tragically killed in a car accident. His sisters were six and two. Coming to terms with the devastating loss of your parents is hard enough for anyone. But imagine having to deal with this terrible grief, at the same time as the prospect of being separated from your brother and sister.

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Displaced: (left to right) Patrick Dodson sitting with his sisters Georgina Dodson and Fay Wade along with friend Charlie Yeeda. Charlie, Georgina and Fay were stolen from their parents at an early age. Photograph: Reuters



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Muscovites learn the rules and rewards of trolley warfare

The first ever hypermarket in the former Soviet Union has opened in Moscow. As our correspondent reports, it symbolises the changing priorities of post-Communist Russia. While the city's polling booths were empty for municipal elections, the aisles were packed.

The blue Lada in front rams into an errant shopping trolley and shunts it impatiently out of the way. Fair enough. With temperatures cold enough to freeze your nostril hair, only a fool would get out of the car any more often than necessary.

Inside the store - a huge white and almost windowless concrete block not far from Boris Yeltsin's city residence - there is a jam to rival Oxford Street in the January sales. Thousands of fur-clad men and women bump, barge, and crash their way around the aisles.

Fruit and veg looks like the North Circular on a Monday morning. There is a scrum at frozen meats, and you cannot see dried fruit for a wall of furry backs. It is a battle in mime: when the piped pop music stops, almost no one is speaking. The hush of concentrating minds fills the shop floor.

Twenty-thousand people visited Ramstore last Sunday, a \$34m (£21.25m) Turkish-financed venture in south-west Moscow that glories in the status of the former Soviet Union's first genuine hypermarket and shopping centre. Admittedly, the management says that an astonishing 12,000 of them were sightseeing, but that is understandable in a city where the average salary is officially under \$300 (£187.50) a month. The crowd remains formidable by any standards.

For a start, it was scarcely shopping weather. Temperatures hovered around -20C before plunging even lower, prompting the authorities to ban small children from going to school. On the same day, the city held municipal elections which could have been nullified, such was the miserly turnout. About 29 per cent (4 per cent above the legal minimum) voted.

But the weather did not dampen the curiosity of Muscovites when it came to inspecting the dubious pleasures of consumerism. All day they tramped up and down the hill from the metro station. Clearly, the lure of the market economy outlasted the appeal of taking part in an already widely discredited, obscure, and largely symbolic, democratic ritual.

The last few years have spawned supermarkets across Moscow, but they are hardly ever crowded. Something of the

receipt, and return to collect your goods. Abacuses remain common. Credit cards are worthless. Customer service is unknown.

When Ramstore opened last month, its managers discovered they had an unusual task on their hands. They had to teach Russians how to hyper-shop.

At first, their customers peeled price tags off the goods, and took them to the cashiers, just as in gastronomy. Plastic bags in Russia are still treated as precious: if they have any at all, market stall owners can rarely be persuaded to part with them without a fee. Unaware that here they were free in limitless numbers, Russians brought their own baskets, adding to the crush. "Our customers were just not familiar with this type of shopping," said Aziz Bulgu, the store's general director. Nor, initially, were the staff. "We had a little problem at first," he admitted. "But now they say 'spasibo' and smile."

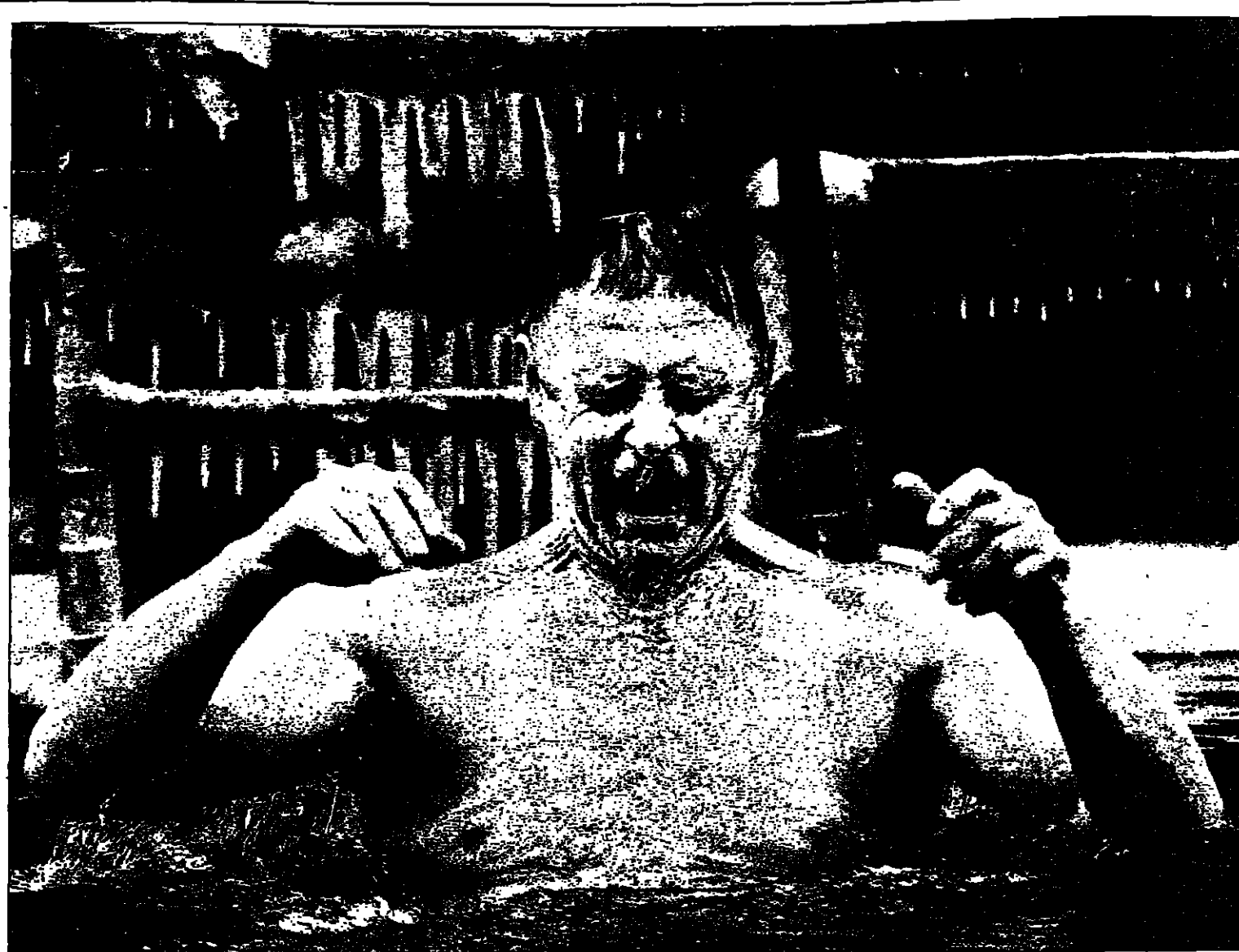
But the biggest surprise is the top-selling item. Mr Bulgu's computer-print out reveals that it is not vodka, or bread, or sausage, or chocolate - or any other of the standard fixtures on a Russian dinner table. Bananas, by far, take the biscuit, as it were. Having only been able to buy them for some four years - and because they are cheap - Muscovites buy them by the bagful. Last week, Ramstore was shifting more than five tons a day.

What conclusions can we draw? It is no longer realistic to deny that the market economy is advancing in parts of Russia, albeit largely in the capital. Muscovites - who 10 years ago would stand all night in queues for products - are no less unwilling to consume than anyone else, if they have the money.

For Mr Bulgu, the lesson is as clear as the red stars that shine from the Kremlin: "I must expand as quickly as possible, before the competition arrives," he said happily.

BY PHIL REEVES

atmosphere of the old Soviet system, in which there were special shops for the party top brass and diplomats, still survives. Omnipresent guards in military uniforms and scandalously high prices usually deter all but the newly wealthy and foreigners. Most Russians shop in the open-air markets, where prices depend on an ability to haggle, or in the dank, malodorous, gloom of "gastronom" - broken down, Soviet-era stores that used to be state-run.



Shock treatment: A man plunging yesterday into Lake Komsomolskoye in Minsk, where it was -25C

Photograph: Vasily Fedosenko

Even wrapping up against the cold can kill

Russia is experiencing its coldest winter for half a century. As Phil Reeves reports, it is causing chaos.

Children under 11 have been ordered not to go to school. Metal cables that power Moscow's trolley buses have frozen and snapped. Hundreds of people have been treated for frostbite and hypothermia and one person has been killed by a falling icicle.

Few nations are more hardened to hostile weather than Russia, whose deep chill wrecked Napoleon's army and kept the Nazis at bay. But even

this tough country is struggling against a cold snap that has sent the mercury plunging to -32C in Moscow, freezing to death five people in one night.

There has been no repetition of officials say, of an incident on New Year's Eve several years ago when a woman had to be cut out of her frozen nylon stockings. But problems there have been aplenty. The last time the capital had such cold weather was in 1940, when temperatures hit an all-time low of -42.2C. Since then car ownership has risen, but driving skills have not. Of 25 people run over in Moscow during this cold snap, police attribute 17 to the amount of clothing worn by drivers - who can barely

move behind the wheel - and the hearing difficulties of fur-hat-wearing pedestrians with their earflaps down.

Russians are no less fascinated than the British by their climate. This month the magazine *Stolitsa* devoted an article to the subject which included the claim that in the winter more people die in their cars having sex. This, the author alleged, is because they leave their engines running to keep warm, killing themselves with carbon monoxide.

More plausibly, the magazine also revealed that the women who run Moscow's street stalls wear up to four pairs of underpants to keep out frost-

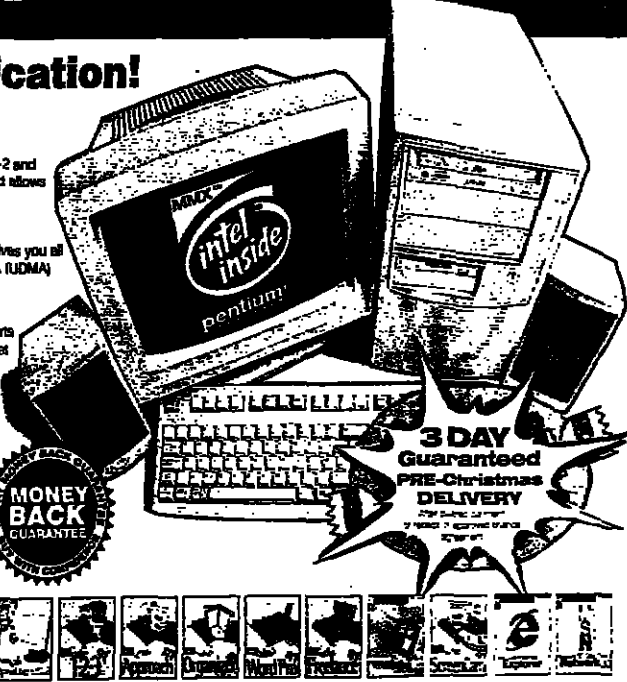
bite. One of the products that the women were selling yesterday was ice cream, which Russians eat in any weather, despite their conviction that cold drinks give you a cold. While they continued to work despite the weather, so did the widely loathed traffic police who carried on flagging down cars for fines or bribes.

The police can expect to be busy in the spring. When the snow melts each year, they find the corpses of homeless or drunk people who are among the dozens who freeze to death in the open air. These, in the grim argot of the force, are known as "snow-drops". This year is certain to be no exception.

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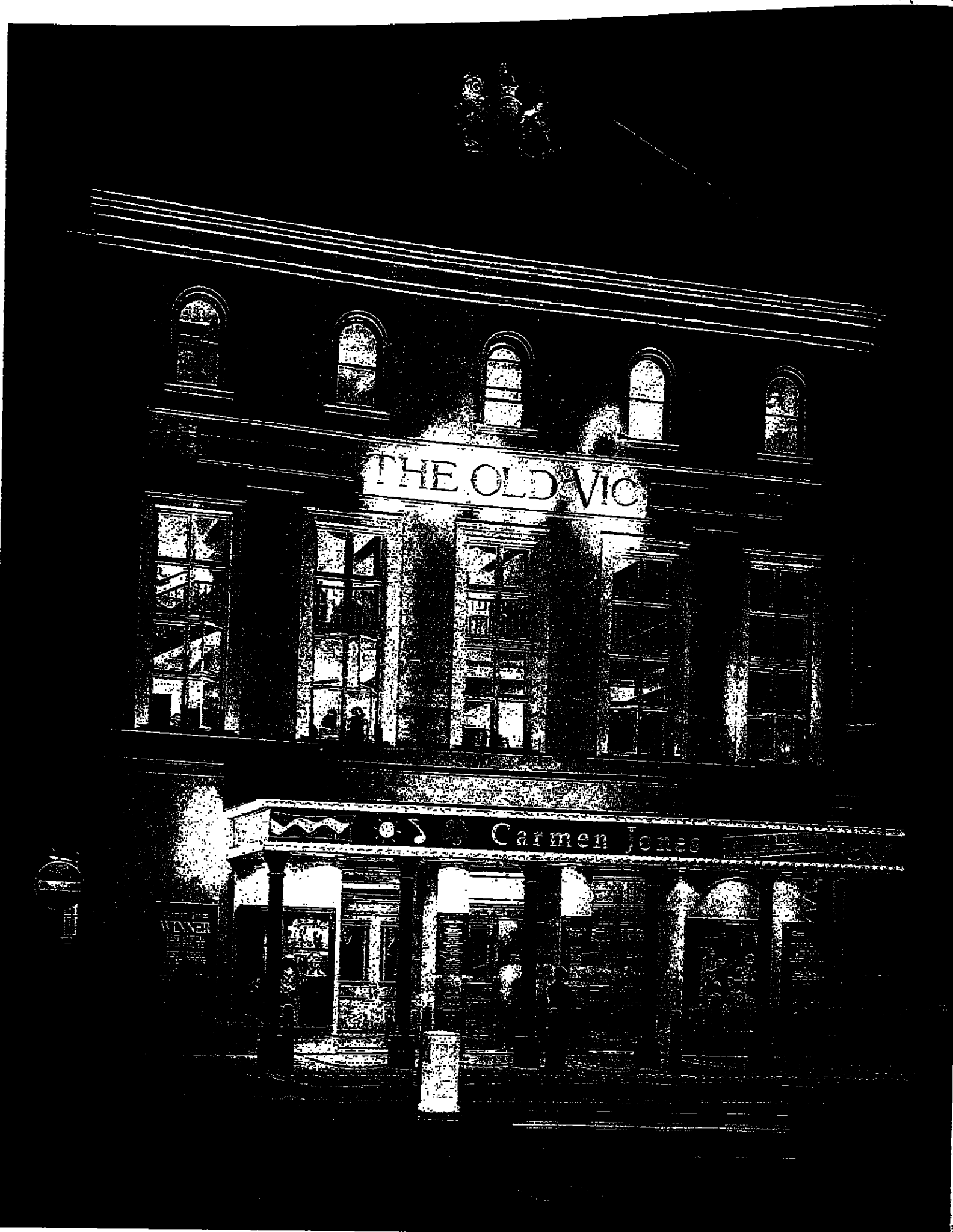


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The Old Vic is up for sale – and, with it, the site that is home to the National Theatre Studio, hothouse of new writing talent, like that of comedian Patrick Marber (top left), whose poker-faced theatre debut *'Dealer's Choice'* (inset below) was workshopped there, and regular stamping-ground for such theatrical gurus as Peter Brook (bottom left)
Photographs: Geraint Lewis. (Marber: Brook), Hugo Glendinning (*Dealer's Choice*)

For sale: one prime location with dramatic prospects

THE INDEPENDENT

Stuck for ideas this Christmas...?

WIN a Hewlett Packard Pavilion 3130 Multimedia home PC, Microsoft software bundle and £150 to spend on www.e-christmas.com

Have you been wandering around your local high street thinking about what presents to buy for Christmas?

Why not take it easy and order on the new internet website, www.e-christmas.com, which brings the finest shops across the UK and Europe into your living room via your PC.

The e-christmas website has been designed by Microsoft, VISA and Hewlett Packard to overcome many of the perceived complexities of buying over the internet including language, payment, shipping and delivery issues. Purchases are delivered the next day by UPS – whose online tracking facility allows you to check the delivery status of your purchase.

We have two Pavilion 3130 Multimedia PCs to win. Each comes with a 200MHz Intel Pentium processor, 16MB's SD RAM, 7GB's hard disk, 16 speed CD-ROM player, super fast modem for quick internet access, Windows 95 keyboard and 15" monitor with stereo speakers.

The software bundle includes Microsoft Works, Quicken financial package, Calculator, Easyphoto, reference and entertainment.

Call one 90p per minute at all times. Winner picked at random after sales close 23 December 1997. Usual Newspaper Publishing rules apply. Editor's decision is final.

packages such as UK Infopedia, FIFA 97 and Sim City, together with 3 months free internet access with internet service provider PIPEX. The winners will each get £150 to spend on www.e-christmas.com.

To enter this competition simply dial the number below, answer the following question on line and leave your name and full address:

Q: Who is the internet service provider offering 3 months free internet access?

Call 0930 525223

The e-christmas website is open until mid January and can be reached on www.e-christmas.com.

The Pavilion Home PC range is available from: Byte, Gurus, Dixons, John Lewis, PC World, Staples & Tempo.

For further information:

Hewlett Packard products: 0990 474747

Microsoft products: 0345 002000

The future of the Old Vic site hangs in the balance. Sealed bids are on the table, but hidden beneath the headlines is an untold story. Whoever buys it will also decide the fate of the National Theatre's jewel in the crown: its Studio. David Benedict investigates.

Bloody but unbowed, Sir Peter Hall is scouring London for a new home for his repertory company. His much-vaunted scheme to rejuvenate Lilian Baylis's beloved Old Vic by presenting a healthy mix of classics and new plays foundered within a year. According to the story that was bruited abroad when he began his adventure, Ed and David Mirvish, the theatre's Canadian owners, told him that he didn't need to make money. They were not, however, in the business of losing it hand over fist. Less than a year in, they pulled the plug and put the theatre up for sale.

Before anyone leaps to the conclusion that these guys must be a pair of money-grabbing philistines, it should be pointed out that, since they bought the theatre in 1982, the Vic has enjoyed its successes, but it has also been dark for long periods. Significantly for Hall's brave reign, Jonathan Miller's now famous Classics season (which launched the careers of Richard Jones, Alex Jennings and countless others) resulted in critical triumphs but financial disaster. As Lady Bracknell (almost) said, "To lose one investment could be regarded as a misfortune. To lose both looks like carelessness." Careless the Mirvishes were not. The word

"philanthropic" is nearer the mark, when you consider what they did with the less famous part of the property, ie the vast annexe that crouches over the Old Vic box-office across the road from the theatre itself.

Since 1984, this slab of Fifties functionalism has housed the National Theatre Studio, the shy, unheralded heart of the National's present and future. It's the nerve-centre where writers, directors and actors dream, plan and develop new ideas, hone their craft and learn new skills and is, quite simply, invaluable. Everyone you can think of, from Peter Brook to Patrick Marber (and plenty you have yet to hear about), has led or taken part in workshops or been a writer-in-residence there. Astonishingly, the Studio has occupied this enormous three-storey site (plus basement) completely rent-free. But the gravy train is about to hit the buffers; together with the Old Vic, the annexe too is up for sale.

There has been a striking lack of industry gossip about possible purchasers. In a breathless *News of the World* exclusive, the trade paper *The Stage* announced that the club-owner Alan Whitehead planned to turn the 1,000-seat theatre into London's first lap-dancing venue. Then, 12 days ago, the Studio's director Sue Higginson was surprised to see Lord Lloyd-Webber peering through the door to her office, asking if he could look round the building. His visit was swiftly followed by one from his second-in-command; but, for reasons unknown, Lloyd-Webber is now believed to have

formally withdrawn his bid. At the end of last week, a Newcastle industrialist allegedly came into the frame with plans to create a London home for both the D'Oyly Carte and the English Shakespeare Company but, with sealed bids submitted weeks ago, such press reports are mere speculation. What re-

As Higginson sagely observes: "I'm sure there are men with bulldozers who are very interested in a prime site." A commercial buyer could quite sensibly buy plans for the theatre by demolishing the annexe for development, leaving the Studio out on the street. The only guarantee the National has

residencies in Lithuania, South Africa and Edinburgh. And last week saw Barrie Rutter working on an unperformed Dryden drama with a company of Asian actors. But the thrust of the Studio's work is new writing. The extraordinary 1994-95 Royal Court Upstairs season, which pole-vaulted the likes of Sarah Kane, Joe Penhall, Judy Upton, Nick Grosso and Judith Johnson into the theatrical stratosphere and made Stephen Daldry's name as a playwriting entrepreneur, was in fact co-produced with the National Theatre Studio, which runs relays of writers on eight-week residencies.

The best illustration of the seed-bed approach is the case of Patrick Marber, alternative comedian turned prize-winning playwright. His agent persuaded Higginson



to see him doing stand-up. Fascinated, she invited him in for a cup of tea and a chat. "I thought, we have to work with him, so I asked him and he said he'd like to run a poker school. I said, 'What? Monopoly money?' and he replied, 'No, real poker players, real money.' I said, 'Not in my studio you're not.' What became apparent was that he had a play lurking around in him but didn't know quite how to get it out. So at the end of a two-week improvisation workshop, he asked if I wanted to see what they'd been doing. About five of us went in and saw what was really the first act of *Dealer's Choice*. Patrick kept clicking his fingers between scenes and we thought, God, this is so annoying. Doesn't he realise that of course

is a four-month notice period. In terms of mounting a survival campaign, the Studio is a victim of its low profile. The work that goes on there is about process, not product. It is privately funded and thus free of the pressure of having to achieve "results". Developmental and experimental in the widest sense, its work isn't obviously newsworthy and, outside the confines of the profession, remains an untold story.

Higginson sees the Studio as an oxygen-supplier to the NT's lifeblood, not a luxury, some haphazard organisation in which artists fool around with the right to fail. She and two deputies oversee 22 projects a year, with a total budget of £400,000. Teams of actors, directors and teachers have done

we can see that this is a kitchen and then this is a restaurant? We were so sucked into it we'd completely forgotten it was all improvised and he was just bringing the scene to a close. That was how it started."

Of course, this is not the only place where writers develop ideas, but it's rare to find an organisation that can then place scripts in production not just at the National but at theatres across the country. The Studio is unique in its breadth and scope: Theatre de Complicité's early shows, and its internationally successful *Street of Crocodiles*, all began life there; singers from ENO's Contemporary Opera Studio regularly go there to learn acting techniques; a musical adaptation of Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is currently under development there.

"Frankly, it's driving me nuts," sighs Higginson of the Studio's uncertain future. Forced to play the waiting game, she has frozen all future work beyond February. She is facing the hard fact that the National Theatre Studio is a complete anomaly. "We're privately funded, yet we're part of a big national company. We have our own building but, hey, we don't have to earn any money from box-office or produce any work for people to assess in order to justify our existence. We train but we're not a training school, we're here for the profession. All those elements make us very, very unusual."

She smiles and shrugs. "It's horribly boring. Trevor Nunn loves us. The Mirvishes have been fantastically good... It would just be a pity if we had to go." That remark clinches it: the 1997 Understatement of the Year Award goes to the National Theatre Studio's Sue Higginson.

en, they

between the
top drawer and
the top shelf

Men, they just don't get it, do they?



1 Underwire pistachio lace bra, £31, and lace knickers, £25, by Huit, available from Bentalls, Kingston on Thames, and branches nationwide. Stockist enquiries: 0171-631 3157

2 White pack-of-three camisoles, £12; pack-of-three high-cut knickers, £9, all by Muji, 27 Oxford Street, London W1 and branches nationwide. Stockist enquiries: 0171-323 2208

3 Nude underwire bra, £16.00; high-leg knickers, £9.00, all by Warner. Available from Selfridges, Oxford Street, London W1, Dickins and Jones, Regent Street, London W1, other House of Fraser stores and major department stores. Stockist enquiries: 0115 979 5796

4 Black firework underwire bra, £50; firework brief, £25; and firework suspender, £30, all by Agent Provocateur, 6 Broadwick Street, London W1 and 16 Pont Street, London SW1. Mail-order: 01483 204469; stockist enquiries: 0171-439 0229

Stylist: Charlie Harrington
Hair and Make-up: Alex Babsky at Mandy Coakley
Model: Natasha Elms at Select

Men buying underwear for women. What a business. Mostly they are either painfully embarrassed or painfully wrong. How do you do better? Allow our Ms Blanchard to assist you. Photographs by Sheridan Morley.

"You feel like such a pervert." That seems to be the consensus of the men I talked to on the subject of buying underwear for the women in their life. Men, it seems, have only just come to terms with the buying of their own underwear, so it is hardly surprising that they feel as though the entire queue at M&S is staring at them as they

clutch their lacy bra and knicker set, blushing the closer they get to the counter. They might as well be wearing the damn things, they are so embarrassed. "The whole act of buying women's underwear is thoroughly unpleasant," adds one hapless underwear shopper. "People always think you are buying it for yourself."

One of the main problems for men in search of a little bit of naughty luxury is that they cannot trust their own judgment. About anything. When it comes to cup sizes, colour or style of knicker, they are clueless. Tangas, G-strings or hip huggers, they're all the same to most men. And the mere mention of the word "gusset" brings them out in a cold sweat. "What size is the lady?" asks the assistant. "Oh, about your size," the guy replies, without more

than a second glance or indeed a pause to compare the size of his elephantine partner with this waifish young woman who is ringing up "A" cups and size small smalls as he speaks.

A few years ago, there was little room between the plain and practical (Jockey, Hanro or Calvin Klein) and the tawdry and tacky (Ann Summers). These days, however, the lingerie market has boomed. Little boutiques specialising in luxurious lace confections are springing up from Mayfair to Covent Garden.

Agent Provocateur, the label set up by Joe Corre and Serena Rees three years ago selling saucy underwear and fluffy slippers, has spread its wings and expanded from sleazy Soho to upmarket Knightsbridge. Then there are

labels like the French brand Huit, specialising in underwear that is feminine and pretty without going over the top with ribbons, bows and ruffles. These are scents that are practical as well as pleasing to the eye, a balance that is surprisingly difficult to achieve. Shapes are sporty with halter-neck bras, detachable straps and seamless bras, but in powder puff blue, mint green or bright yellow.

Another practical option - and part of any model's kit of essentials - is nude underwear. All the major underwear companies make lingerie that looks invisible and has as few seams and lines as possible. Men hate them. They say they look like surgical appliances. Perhaps they do, but they are the closest thing to wearing nothing

under your clothes, but with all the support of more heavy-duty underwear.

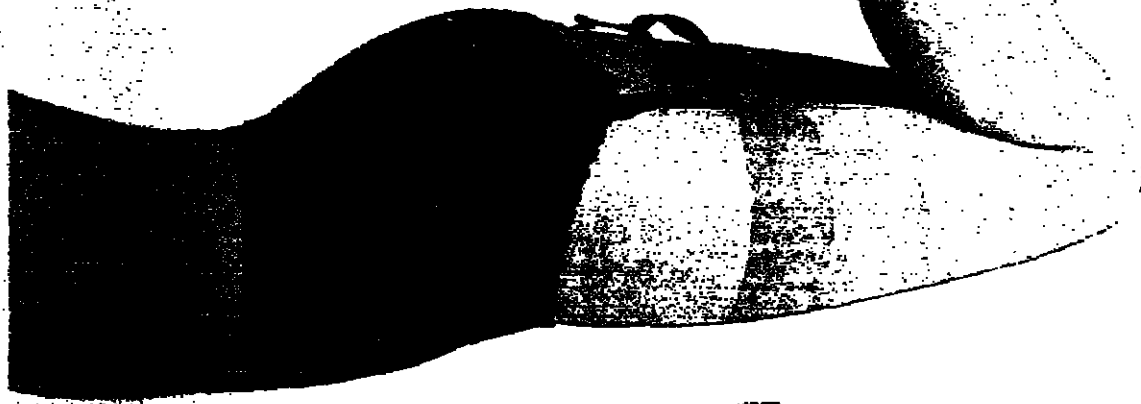
When women buy underwear for their girlfriends, either platonic or otherwise, they usually opt for something plain, simple and cotton. Men could take note and save themselves a lot of embarrassment. No frills, no fuss, just a sporty bra or a pair of knickers that have a wide elastic waistband, or a comfortable look, usually in black, white or grey, and veering towards the masculine side of underwear.

Muji make good quality, minimal camisoles and knickers that have no trills whatsoever but are less brutal than a pair of Jockeys. And you really won't feel like a pervert waiting in the queue.

HOW TO GET IT RIGHT IN THE LINGERIE DEPARTMENT

1. Before even stepping into a lingerie department or specialised store, become a Peeping Tom. Take a look into your loved one's underwear drawer, find her favourite bra and check the size. Then look at the knickers and do the same.
2. While practising the Peeping Tom routine, it's worth checking the preferred colours, shapes and styles. Ask yourself: is it underwired or not? Are there G-strings, or hip-huggers? Control panels? Lace? Cotton? Black, white, red pistachio or cream?
3. Armed with this knowledge, decide what style of underwear to go for. Remember, it's got to be special, so basic cotton briefs, (unless they are by Hanro) are not advisable. Think about what will make her feel sexy, not what you think is sexy. The two may be very different. Sexy is black lace high-leg knickers and a matching bra which creates or enhances the cleavage. It's not teeny weeny wisps of chiffon, with no support and little comfort.
4. Take a female friend with an impartial attitude shopping - not your secretary or mother.
5. The final option is the easy way out, but it will also go down a treat. Luxury lingerie store Rigby & Peller offer gift vouchers, at denominations of £25, £50, £75 and £100. The recipient can visit the store at any time, have a specialised bra fitting and buy the underwear of her choice. It's all gorgeous, and a correctly fitted bra does wonders for the bust line. A good bra costs about £75, a made-to-measure bra costs from £200.

Between the top drawer and the top shelf



Joe Corre is famous for two things: his punk parents and his underwear emporium, Agent Provocateur. Here he tells us why he is so interested in ladies' knickers.

When our first shop opened three years ago in Broadwick Street, Soho, it looked just as I had expected it to. However, the personal sense of achievement was far more intense than I had expected. This was entirely due to the reaction we received from the public. Typical responses were: "Fantastic, finally someone has opened the shop I have always been looking for," or "I just popped in to say I Love You!" In addition, we also had people spit on the window whilst ranting Christian ethics at us. The reason that these reactions were im-

portant to me was that each and every decision made in creating Agent Provocateur was a personal one, with the sole aim of trying to create a personal, sexy, fantasy environment and then share it with the public. This in itself is in stark contrast with the usual mathematical marketing process by which most businesses open. It is what makes the difference between a personal experience, where the customer has some empathy with the creator, or a mass impersonal experience that one would find on the high street.

I have been asked many times why I got involved in ladies' underwear. The truth is that I love women and their pure sexual femininity. Once a lady came to my shop to return a gift that had been given to her by a male friend. She said she had to return it because she was a feminist and was therefore unable to wear sexy underwear!

What a shame that she did not understand the power and advantage that lies in being different to a man instead of either trying to be the same as men or simply opting to have no sexuality at all.

Growing up, I don't remember any particular interest in ladies' underwear although I was surrounded to an extent by sexual imagery. I suppose the earliest time I can remember being interested in knickers was when I was about 10 years old, riding in the back of Steve Jones's car (Sex Pistols guitarist). He used to collect the knickers from all the girls he had slept with which were stuffed in every crevice. I remember pulling out this pair of leopard-skin knickers which I promptly put in my pocket and nicked because they were so exotic and interested my curiosity so much.

I think underwear is like outerwear in that you need different

looks for different occasions, always bearing in mind, however, that sex could be on the agenda.

When we design our collections, we think about creating garments that have an effect in shaping a more feminine silhouette. We also experiment a lot with colour and fabric. But we never base decisions on what is commercial or trendy, only on what we think makes a woman look more sexy. I cannot sell things I do not personally like.

Seam and heel stockings, £8; fishnet stockings, £8; sheer knickers with suspenders, £25; maribou mules, £55, all from Agent Provocateur. For mail-order, ring 01483 268888



BELOVED AND BONK

Diary of a divorce

The thing everybody says to you when you're dumped is "you'll find someone else". It becomes the conclusion to every conversation and every expression of sympathy. When you hear that little mantra you feel like a recent amputee being told that they will grow new legs. It's just an impossibility. And, like every other emotional amputee, I felt my limbs were gone forever when Beloved left me. Sure I could master pretty serviceable walking on a pair of wooden legs - but I'd never dance.

That was last month. Now I'm contemplating learning the Pasa Doble and Gymnastic Disco. I've sprouted new legs, the only problem is that having grown so fast and so long they still wobble a little.

The snag with Bolts From The Blue such as the one which hit me and VNC (my new Very Nice Chap) is that there isn't any preliminary mucking about to break you in to being half of a pair. No tentative courting, no gentle dawning of affection over the course of umpteen visits to the cinema and a bit of hand-holding over a dinner table. You can't pretend, you can't play hard to get. You just have to cope with the fact that you are suddenly connected at some profound level with a person who you have only just met. You know what their innermost thoughts are, you know the song they are singing in their head (it's the same as the one in yours: Bangles "If She Knew What She Wants"), but you don't know if they listen to Radio 4 at breakfast or how to spell their surname. And it's all a bit of a shock.

The most scary part of course is that the stakes are so high. This isn't like falling in love at 16 with no responsibilities beyond getting your homework done and remembering to feed your hamster. VNC can't be a little escapist fun because I have two kids, sundry animals and a mortgage resting on my back and I can't afford to fall over. And with all those attachments I'm certainly not a merry little thing for VNC. It's potentially Very Serious. We should be taking things Very Slowly and Carefully. But that's impossible with Bolts From The Blue. You just have to get on with it.

So in the interests of getting Buster and Bunny used to the newly-joined pair of socks that is me and VNC we took a huge plunge and all went to France for the weekend. The dynamics of this situation were of course potentially horrific. Buster and Bunny, in addition to vying with each other for my attention, now perceived another competitor in VNC. I, of course, wanted to lavish attention on him without any interference from them. Poor VNC meanwhile, having never had children, had no idea of the hotbed of vice and intrigue into which he had fallen.

When it comes to baptisms of fire, our weekend in Honfleur was hot enough to hard-glaze stoneware. Buster and Bunny kept up a constant interchange of violence and insult from the moment we got on the ferry. Bunny sulked right the way through a meal in the best restaurant in town, creating an atmosphere akin to that in the anterooms of the electric chair. Buster gave full expression to his Celtic temper, throwing various objects across the hotel room whenever he lost at cards. This gave me the necessary light-the-blue-touch-paper stimulus to show who he inherited it from. Both of them managed to knock on our bedroom door at extremely crucial moments during the night with requests to solve entirely spurious problems, lost socks, phantom tummys, TV shows being broadcast in French.

And then driving home from Portsmouth, at half past eleven at night on a godforsaken bit of road in the pouring rain, the clutch went on my car. We were transported home in the back of a truck with Bunny pinning VNC into a particularly nasty Yoga position with her dead sleeping weight.

If ever a lightning bolt was going to go a bit flaccid and impotent in the face of the cold splash of imperfect reality it was during those three days. But it didn't. In fact the magic blue fire spilled over a little on to the kids and there were moments when all four of us were outlined in its neon: VNC and Buster pretending to abscond with the praline and truffles we'd just bought from the *chocolaterie*; playing charades over croissants in a cafe; deliberately crashing our dodginess into each other on a night cold enough to freeze Hell.

No doubt about it. Fate's done its work. We just need to catch up with it.

Stevie Morgan

In Fitzrovia, a young woman savours the new aromatherapy



Above, the lady is a smoker - Christina Graham at her club. Left, the lady is a vamp - Ginger Spice needs a light. Main photograph: John Voos. Photograph: PA News

A good cigar is a celestial indulgence rarely seen. Squeezed out by economic sanity and olfactory puritanism it has become a lost pleasure. But in London's West End Nicole Veash sniffs something in the air: the rich perfume of Havana.

A pinstriped suit, maximum décolletage and a huge Havana cigar. Is this the very image of Girl Power for the millennium? The smart money says no, for that was Ginger Spice at the *Spice World* movie premiere on Tuesday night, and the smart money says that her best days may not lie ahead.

But in much less time than it takes to enjoy a decent Havana, you can cross Soho to a place where Sybil Gosselin has

seen the future: it involves lots of women and it smokes - in heavy, aromatic swirls.

Earlier this year we were bombarded with images of Claudia Schiffer, Demi Moore and even the health-conscious Madonna, puffing on fat Havanas, and that provoked (or reflected) a great explosion of cigar bars in New York. Two months ago, in what used to be the White Tower, a rather regal Greek restaurant where Princess Margaret has been known to dine, Gosselin opened the Number One Cigar Club of London, and invited in the city boys and girls who always hankered for a Havana.

Sybil Gosselin is an emancipator: "I know from experience that the taste appeals not only to the male palate. That's why I am trying to encourage women to try cigars. Cigar smoking is one of the good things in life. It is like discovering a fine wine."



And needless to say, when cigars are offered around after a dinner I am almost always left out. People assume as a girl you just don't smoke them.

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Since the club opened, more than 100 people, including 25 women, have joined and Sybil hopes that they will have 600 members by the end of the next year. But a virgin smoker does not have to commit to membership. The place is also a bar and restaurant. "Some people genuinely want to try and acquire a taste for cigars, others join because it is fashionable," she says. There are 100 types of cigar on offer, from fat Monte Cristos to torpedo-shaped Cohibas and the romantically named Romeo y Julieta.

"We buy all our cigars from Hunters and Frankau, one of the oldest cigar importers in the country," says Sybil. "When you take into account different brands and sizes, there are about 800 cigars in all. I would

recommend you start with one of our most popular brands."

As for Ginger Spice: we see her holding the cigar. But did she ever smoke it?

The No. 1 Cigar Club of London, 1 Percy Street, London W1. Tel: 0171-636 8141

Celebrate advent and cavort for the full moon

There are many ways to celebrate the glories of midwinter and feel the spirit of the Lord or just feel the spirit. Rob Stepany sees Reverend Geraint ap Iorwerth do most of them.

It is the night of the Yuletide full moon, and in celebration a circle dance is in full rotation in the church hall of the mid-Wales village of Pennal. The Reverend Geraint ap Iorwerth, the local rector, is an enthusiastic participant - despite the fact that the inspiration for this ritual is entirely pagan.

The day had been still and raw, the ribbons of smoke from the small cottage chimneys barely lifting off the valley floor. Just before the dance began the moon made an appearance, veiled by high cloud, but undeniably. Stepping out with the best of them, ap Iorwerth was pleased to celebrate her splendour, the cycle of the seasons and the power of nature in a series of dances which drew on pre-Christian, Hindu and Jewish traditions.

"I believe in and celebrate all the festivals of the Anglican calendar," says ap Iorwerth. But his wider philosophy is to encourage any decent-hearted spirituality, whatever its well-springs, and especially if it includes an element of what his forthcoming book *Honest to Goddess* will call the "divine feminine", in worship. And by this he means to emphasise intuition, intimacy, feeling and the wisdom present in all religions and spiritual paths.

In her brief introduction to the dance, Claire Jenkins speaks of the unity of creation, the healing power of love and the energy that through us can link the earth and the heavens. Clearly, none of these ideas is

alien to the Anglican Church. But the context in which they are expressed would not be easily recognised.

The 25 circle dancers are drawn from a range of faiths and none. There are Buddhists, elders from the Quaker movement, adherents of a New Age meditation group, Christians and those of a pagan persuasion who would never set foot in the church, but for whom this church hall is neutral ground.

Penal is a small community where south and north Wales meet, and that is a faultline which, historically, has been almost as quake-prone as any border between the English and Welsh. But it was also a site of reconciliation when Owain Glyndwr brought together the splintered factions of his homeland and was declared Prince of a free Wales in the 1400s.

It is bringing together which Geraint ap Iorwerth is keen to foster. Aided by the spirit of the place, he seems to be succeeding. As Bernard Condron, once a mechanical engineer in Berkshire, says: You do change when you come to the valley. You lose your cynicism and cyn-

ical theologian of the Orthodox faith. On each wall of the rectory itself is a Green Man representing the fecundity of vegetation. And the village Church of St Peter ad Vincula, which has seen the celebration of a Shinto wedding with a Buddha placed on the altar, gives space to the sacred texts of all the major world religions.

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Will you, won't you ... Reverend Geraint ap Iorwerth, above right, joins the dance. Photograph: Steve Peake

fact people in a way that is deeper and more open. It is not the same as in Wokingham."

Liz Butler, a teacher from Machynlleth, at a circle dance for the first time, was broadly approving of the efforts to find common ground between very different approaches to spirituality. "All religions have a way to God. For us, Christianity is the one. But as far as possible, we should worship together," she says.

am happy with Him". And that is fair enough," ap Iorwerth commences. "From the other side there are probably also Mother Goddess fundamentalists who object to her being christianised." And no one knows what the Anglican hierarchy will make of the publication of *Honest to Goddess*, which has a title chosen to evoke memories of Bishop Robinson's *Honest to God* which rocked the C of E when it appeared in the Sixties. But, ap Iorwerth believes, there is no alternative to building bridges.

The question of whether the conventional Anglican church is dying evokes a wry smile. "It is already dead," he says. "With only 2 per cent of the population regular communicants, it is on the verge of meeting the American definition of a cult."

"But the decline of conventional religion does not mean there is no spirituality. Somewhere in the Universe is a source which transmutes suffering and pain, and the mystery of what it is to be human can never be adequately explained by reason alone. We need a symbolic way of perceiving ourselves and our world. The soul needs images to breathe and grow, and it is that need which drives all the faiths."

Ap Iorwerth's hope is that the church hierarchy will support ecumenical work in Pennal - even if that work extends interdenominational co-operation into more general support for a contemplative lifestyle and all aspects of spiritual quest. And why not? A Centre of Alternative Spirituality would nicely complement the Centre for Alternative Technology five miles up the road which, for those seeking new approaches to old problems, has already put this part of Wales on the map.

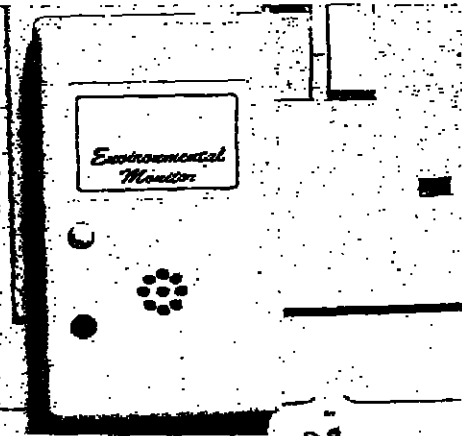
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Daphne Fielding

Daphne Winifred Louise Vivian, writer; born 11 July 1904; married 1926 Viscount Weymouth (succeeded 1946 as sixth Marquess of Bath, died 1972; two sons, and two sons and one daughter deceased; marriage dissolved 1953); 1953 Xan Fielding (died 1991; marriage dissolved 1978); died 5 December 1997.

Daphne Fielding was a society author in the decades between 1950 and 1980. Having been a part of the world of Bright Young Things in the 1920s, she was well known in society as the Marchioness of Bath, and following her marriage to Xan Fielding she produced a stream of books of easy charm which achieved great popularity. Good-looking when young, in later life she was a tall, handsome figure, and could have been mistaken for a distinguished actress.

Daphne was the daughter of the fourth Lord Vivian and his wife, Barbara, a former Gaiety Girl, who was to marry three further times. The family was eccentric; many years later, her mother the fifth Lord Vivian (who died in 1991), variously a farm labourer in Canada, a publicity manager in San Francisco and a partner of the impresario C.B. Cochran, had the misfortune to be shot in the stomach in 1954 by his mistress Mavis Wheeler, the former wife of Sir Mortimer Wheeler, the archaeologist, a drama which occupied the headlines for many days.

Daphne emerged from a childhood which was a mixture of hilarity and insecurity, later described with relish in her memoirs, *Mercury Presides* (through Evelyn Waugh declared these as "marred by discretion and good taste"). She passed through Queen's College in London, and St James's, Malvern, and gravitated, through her friends the Lygon sisters, to the stimulating world of Oxford in the 1920s, and to that set dominated by Harold Acton, Evelyn Waugh and Brian Howard. The friends she made then were friends for life, a group that gave each other unwavering loyalty despite infidelities and political differences, everlastingly self-protecting, and a group through which she met Viscount Weymouth, heir to the Marquess of Bath.

There was parental opposition to their union. Henry Weymouth's father declaring that he needed "a steady wife" and finding that Daphne did not fit this category. Weighing in, her father announced that he thought Weymouth an unsuitable husband. They were married in secret at St Paul's, Knightsbridge, in 1926, and then again considerably more publicly at St Martin-in-the-Fields in 1927, the bride dressed by Norman Hartnell. (When eventually they were divorced, there was a prolonged court case before three judges to dissolve that earlier marriage, and regularise the unusual situation.)

Old Lord Bath in 1928 handed the running of the Wiltshire estate, Longleat, to his son (not without certain misgivings about his capacity for work) and he and Daphne threw themselves wholeheartedly into the management of the estate. They employed Russell Page to redo

the gardens and were involved in extensive forestry work. To supplement her income, Daphne wrote articles for newspapers and magazines, which brought her under the protective care of Lord Beaverbrook.

They had four sons and a daughter. The eldest boy died in 1930, just before his first birthday, and the youngest, Lord Valentine Thynne, died after hanging himself in 1979. Her daughter Caroline predeceased her, and she is survived by two sons, the present Marquess and his brother, Lord Christopher, who are on notoriously bad terms. (There was a rumour that at Lord Christopher's wedding to Antonia Palmer in 1968 the cake was laced with LSD. The Queen was a guest.)

Henry Weymouth spent much of the Second World War as a prisoner of the Germans, which did not help the marriage. In 1946 he succeeded his father as Marquess of Bath. Forced by crippling death duties he opened Longleat to the public in 1949, with an entrance fee of half a crown a head. By 1953 he had added a tearoom and tennis court, laid out a putting green, and floated pedalos for hire on the lake. But the marriage was over and the Baths were divorced in May 1953.

Daphne wrote the first



Loyal friend: Fielding by Augustus John, 1943

guidebook to Longleat, a lively history of the Thynne family from 1566 to 1949, which she researched and wrote in three weeks. This she followed with *Before the Sunset Fades* (1953), a slim 30-page book about life above and below stairs at Longleat, decorated, appropriately, by her old friend and Wiltshire neighbour Cecil Beaton.

In 1953 she married the war hero and travel writer Xan Fielding, a man 14 years her junior, a happy marriage which lasted until 1978. During these years they lived variously in Cornwall, Morocco, Portugal and Uzes, where they settled for some years, surrounded by a variety of pets and visited by their many friends.

While married to Fielding, she wrote her books *Mercury Presides* (1954) and its sequel, *The Nearest Way Home* (1970), and a novel, *The Adonis Garden* (1961), of which Evelyn Waugh wrote that she had "squandered six books in one", adding, "You have used almost everything that has happened in the last twelve years."

The Duchess of Jermy Street, a life of Rosa Lewis of the Cavendish Hotel subsequently serialised on television, was to have been written with the help of George Kinnaird (a writer who also used to help Baroness

de Stoekl with her books), but he gave up while going through a divorce. It was published in 1964 and Evelyn Waugh described it as "jolly good but I think full of inaccuracies".

She wrote a joint life of Lady Cunard and her daughter Nancy, *Emerald and Nancy* (1968), which her friend Dirk Bogarde judged "light on the intellect", fearing that Fielding had whitewashed these two monsters on the grounds that "she couldn't be beastly to chums"; and a portrait of Iris Tree, *The Rainbow Picnic* (1974).

Raleigh Trevelyan, of Hamish Hamilton, then commissioned her to write a life of Gladys Deacon, the 93-year-old Duchess of Marlborough, whom he had come across while researching his book about the Whitakers of Sicily, *Princes Under the Volcano* (1972). This was not her usual milieu, since the duchess belonged to the *belle époque* and intellectual world of Paris of a generation older than Daphne Fielding. Nevertheless she was able to tap her wide circle of loyal friends for anecdotes. To her surprise a man wrongly described as "a young intellectual" proved to have embarked on the same research. However, her friends closed ranks around her, and a word from Lady Diana Cooper to her biographer, Philip Ziegler, caused him to drop the rival's incipient Collins contract like a hot potato.

I know this, for I was that rival. Both books were in due course published, hers under the title *The Face on the Sphinx* (1978). But the story had a happy ending, for those same friends helped me with my life of Cecil Beaton, and Diana Cooper, in her more usual role as peacekeeper, effected a successful rapprochement between us. I enjoyed a number of meetings with Daphne in New York in 1981, during which she chatted amicably about our experiences and regaled me with Cecil Beaton stories. I always remember her line about Patrick Leigh Fermor: "Do you know Paddy? He's such a good friend. He should be turned into pills so that you can take him when you feel low."

Her friend Robert Heber-Percy averred that Daphne Fielding was a better conversationalist and letter-writer than author of books.

In 1978 Xan Fielding left Daphne for a lady described by her friends as "an older woman". Bereft but brave, she was lucky to meet once more an old Oxford friend, Ben Kirtledge, an American millionaire, with whom she went to live in Arizona until his death in 1981. Thereafter she returned to England and settled in the Old Laundry in the shadow of Badminton, where for two years the fox-hunting 10th Duke of Beaufort ("Master") lived on, and where, until her death from cancer in 1995, her daughter Caroline lived as the next Duchess of Beaufort.

Daphne Fielding's last years were spent there. At the famous Horse Trials she could be seen driving about in a tiny self-propelled vehicle and every Sunday she lunched with her son-in-law, where she was a by no means unnoticed figure at the table.

— Hugo Vickers



Kaye, third from left (next to Frank Sinatra), as Nicely-Nicely Johnson in the film version of *Guys and Dolls*, 1955

Photograph: Ronald Grant Archive

Stubby Kaye

Stubby Kaye, actor and singer; born New York 11 November 1918; married Angela Bracewell; died Rancho Mirage, California 14 December 1997.

The genial and rotund singer-comedian Stubby Kaye secured a place in theatrical history on the night of 24 November 1950 when the classic musical *Guys and Dolls* opened on Broadway.

In a score by Frank Loesser full of musical gems, Kaye had the biggest show-stopper of the evening with the revivalist number "Sit Down, You're Rockin' the Boat", the audience demanding several encores. He repeated his role with equal success in London, and recreated his performance in the 1955 film version. Though he had further successes on stage and screen, notably as Marryin' Sam in *Li'l Abner*, it is for his portrayal of Damon Runyon's jovial gambler Nicely-Nicely Johnson that he will always be remembered.

Guys and Dolls was Kaye's

Broadway debut, but he had already had a long career in show business. Born in 1918 in New York, he was not christened Stubby, but always refused to reveal his real first name. In 1939 he won the Major Bowes Amateur Hour contest on radio, the prize including a job touring in vaudeville, where he was sometimes billed as "Extra Padded Attraction". He joined the United Service Organisation (USO) during the Second World War, touring battle fronts and making his London debut performing with Bob Hope.

After the war he continued to work in vaudeville and gained a reputation in night-clubs as Master of Ceremonies for the swing orchestras of Freddy Martin and Charlie Barnet before being cast as Nicely-Nicely (when asked how he is, he always replies, "Nicely, nicely, thank you") in *Guys and Dolls*. As well as his second act show-stopper, Kaye also led the brilliant opening trio, "Fugue for Timborens", in which three gamblers offer their conflicting

score. "The Country's in the Very Best of Hands", with a sharply satirical Mercer lyric, and a charming duet with the show's heroine Daisy Mae, "I'm Past My Prime". "Give him a musical fanfare like Jubilation T. Cornpone", wrote Brooks Atkinson, "and he can sing it with that vaudeville rhythm and those vaudeville blandishments that turn song numbers into triumphant occasions."

When the show was filmed in 1955, Kaye was again considered indispensable casting. DePaul and Mercer also wrote the score for *You Can't Run Away From It* (1956), a musical remake of the Capra classic *It Happened One Night*. As a passenger on a bus carrying a runaway heiress, June Allyson, and a reporter, Jack Lemmon, Kaye provided one of the brighter moments when he promoted friendship by leading the passengers in the song "Howdy Friends and Neighbours".

In 1965 Kaye and Nat "King" Cole acted as Greek chorus in the acclaimed western satire *Cat*

Balloon, and in Bob Fosse's film version of *Sweet Charity* (1968) led the company in the ebullient "I Love to Cry at Weddings". He also appeared in films which included *40 Pounds of Trouble* (1963), *Sex and the Single Girl* (1964) and *The Way West* (1967), and lent his voice to the part-animated *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988). He was a familiar guest television performer in the days when stars such as Perry Como and Dinah Shore had their own shows and he had regular roles in two short-lived series, *Love and Marriage* (1959) and *My Sister Eileen* (1960).

He last appeared on Broadway in 1974, starring with Alice Faye and John Payne in a revival of *Good News*. As the football coach Pooch Kearney, his cherubic countenance unchanged since his days as Nicely-Nicely, he proved as infectious as ever when he led his team in *DeSylvia*, Brown and Henderson's ode to optimism "Sunny Side Up".

— Tom Vulliamy

Stanislaus Rapotec

As a friend and a wartime fellow officer of Stanislaus Rapotec, writes Aleksa Gorkovic, (we served in the Royal Yugoslav Battalion in Middle East before and after his mission to the occupied Yugoslavia), may I add to Professor Stevan Pavlovitch's obituary [9 December]?

Pavlovitch is correct: Rapotec's 1942 reports were "lucid and unprejudiced". However, his statements that the reports "may not have been to the liking of those to whom he reported" and that they were probably not passed to London "but kept in Cairo by Yugoslavs and British there", need clarification.

Rapotec was briefed and debriefed separately by the British Special Operations Executive, by the Yugoslav military and by Jovan Djondjovic, Yugoslav Government Delegate for the Middle East. Serb, Croat and Slovene ministers of the Yugoslav government in London received Rapotec's information with varying degrees of enthusiasm: Rapotec reported positively about General Mihailovic's activities and those of nationalists in Slovenia and confirmed the horrors of the Croat Ustasa regime.

SOE documents released earlier this year ("How a Sovi-

et mole united Tito and Churchill", *Independent*, 28 June) have confirmed that SOE (Cairo) was Communist-dominated. Information favourable to the nationalists was not passed to London.

Pavlovitch writes that Rapotec met Archbishop Stepinac several times during his mission. I had long discussions with Rapotec about these meetings. Stepinac told him that he could achieve more, including saving lives of individual Serbs, by not condemning publicly the Ustasa regime. Rapotec fully believed in the Archbishop's integrity. However, Stepinac's wartime

activities remain controversial, as indeed do those of Pius XII. One must await the release of Vatican documents before making a final judgement.

Rapotec was a flamboyant personality in peace and in war. In 1944, Churchill persuaded King Peter that the only way to safeguard his position was to co-operate with Tito. The young king broadcast on the BBC an appeal to all Yugoslavs to unite under Tito. This caused great confusion. Colonel F. Stropnik, the CO of the Yugoslav battalion, a Slovene like Rapotec, decided to respond to the King's appeal. Officers who

were against co-operation with Communists left. However, Rapotec with his sergeant returned in the night and "stole" the Royal Standard, which had been presented to the battalion personally by the King. This was a great embarrassment to Colonel Stropnik, who was still claiming his allegiance to the King.

Soon afterwards it became clear that no accommodation was possible with Tito. One Slovene, Stropnik, put the red star on his cap, and returned to Yugoslavia, where he was promptly dismissed from the army. The other Slovene, Rapotec, became an Australian.

LAW REPORT: 17 DECEMBER 1997

Aggravated burglary required entry with a weapon

Where, in the course of a burglary, one of the burglars was carrying a weapon but he did not enter the building with it, the offence of aggravated burglary contrary to section 10 of the Theft Act 1968 was not committed.

Regina v Plass Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) Lord Justice Mummery, Mr Justice Hooper and Judge Michael Walker 27 November 1997.

The Court of Appeal allowed the appeal of Kennedy Francis Klass against his conviction on 16 January 1997 at Chelmsford Crown Court of aggravated burglary, but substituted a conviction of burglary pursuant to section 3 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968.

The appellant was one of three men who burgled a caravan. The window of the caravan was broken, and when the

occupant stepped outside he saw a man, who was not the appellant, with a piece of pole in his hand. The victim told the man he did not have any money, and the man smashed him over the head with the pole. The victim ran away and the man followed him and repeatedly struck him with the pole.

On his return to the caravan, the victim discovered that various items were missing. Several hours later the appellant was arrested in connection with another matter. He initially denied involvement in the burglary, but his fingerprints were found inside the caravan. He eventually admitted having been present outside the caravan, and said that one of his companions had suggested the burglary. He had, however, been surprised when one of them had pulled out the pole.

John C. Barker (Registrar of Criminal Appeals) for the appellant; Susanah Farr (Crown Prosecution Service, Chelmsford) for the Crown.

Mr Justice Hooper said that the appeal raised one question of law: whether the offence of aggravated burglary could be committed if the weapon was not being carried by the burglar or one of the burglars who entered the building. Section 9(1)(a) of the Theft Act 1968 provided:

A person is guilty of burglary if (a) he enters any building or part of a building as a trespasser and with intent to commit any such offence as is mentioned in subsection (2) below.

One of the offences mentioned in subsection (2) was the offence of "stealing anything in the building or part of the building in question". Section 10 of the Act provided:

A person is guilty of aggravated burglary if he commits any burglary and at the time has with him... any weapon of offence... (b) "weapon of offence" means any article made or adapted for use for causing injury to or incapacitating a person or intended by the person having it with him for such use.

To commit the offence the person must have a weapon of offence with him at the time of entry: see *R v O'Leary* (1986) 82 Cr App R 341.

There was no evidence that the pole had ever entered the caravan. It had been used to break the window, but that was not, on the facts of the case, an "entry" within the meaning of the word in section 9(1) of the Act.

Assuming that there was only one weapon and that that weapon was with the person on the outside of the building, that person committed a burglary if he was aiding and abetting

the burglary being committed by the person effecting entry. A strict interpretation of section 10 would therefore lead to the conclusion that both could be convicted of aggravated burglary.

The gravamen of the offence of aggravated burglary was, however, entry into the building with a weapon. The purpose of section 10 was to deter people from taking weapons into buildings and other people's houses while committing burglary. Although there were certain academic attractions in the strict approach to the interpretation of the section, a purposive approach was to be preferred. The conviction for aggravated burglary would be quashed, but a conviction of burglary would be substituted, pursuant to section 3 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968.

— Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 11, Abchurch Lane, London EC4N 3DF, telephone 0171-253 2002, (24-hour answering machine 0171-253 2001) or faxed to 0171-253 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, functions, Forthcoming marriages, Marriages) must be submitted in writing and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. Please include a daytime telephone number.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, will attend a performance of Verdi's *La Traviata* at the Royal Festival Hall, London at 8pm on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Philharmonia Orchestra. The Princess Royal, Patron, National Association of Victim Support Schemes, attends the Meeting of the Victim Support Advisory Board, Church House, London SW1, at 6pm. The Duchess of Gloucester attends a "Carols by Candlelight" Service in aid of the Homeless World Charity at St Luke's Church, London SW2, The Duchess of Kent attends the Christmas Carols at Westminster Abbey, London SW1.

Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, London at 10.30am. The Royal Regiment of Wales mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, hand provided by the Welsh Guard.

Birthdays

Mr Simon Bates, disc jockey, 50; Mr Peter Blackburn, president and director-general, Nestlé France, 57; Dame Mary Curwright, mathematician, 97; Mr Christopher Cazenove, actor, 52; Viscount Darnley, Lord-Lieutenant of Warwickshire, 76; Lord de Villiers, barrister, 86; Lord Glenamara, former government minister, 85; Mr Brian Hayes, radio presenter, 60; The Hon Dominic Lawson, Editor, the *Sunday Telegraph*, 41; Mr Kerry Packer, chairman, Consolidated Press Holdings, 68; Sir Leonard Peach, Commissioner for Public Appointments, 65; Mr Robert Robinson, broadcaster and writer, 70; Mr David Smith, former Headmaster, Bradford Grammar School, 63; Mr Tommy Steele, singer and actor, 61.

Anniversaries

Births: Gabrielle-Emilie Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, Marquise du Châtelet, writer, 1706; Ludwig van Beethoven, composer, baptised 1770; Sir Humphry Davy, chemist and inventor, 1778; Jules-Alfred Huot de Gouperon, novelist and historian, 1830; Ford Madox Ford, novelist, 1873; J. Robertson Hare, actor, 1891; Enid Blyton Caldwell, novelist, 1903. Deaths: Simon Bolivar, South American patriot, 1830; Kaspar Hauser, the founding "wild boy" of Nuremberg, 1835; Rear-Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort, hydrographer, 1857; Louis-Marie

Alphonse Daudet, novelist, 1897; Baron Ferdinand James de Rothschild, banker, 1898; Bernard Quaritch, bookseller, 1899; Sir William Thomson, first Baron Kelvin of Largs, physicist, 1907; Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, physician, 1917; Peter Philip Heseltine Warlock, composer and editor, committed suicide 1950; Dana Andrews (Carver Daniel Andrews), actor, 1992. On this day: Drake's ship *The Pelican* (afterwards called *The Golden Hind*) sailed out of Plymouth on a round-the-world voyage, 1577; the Lyric Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, London, opened, 1888; the first radio message was sent across the Atlantic, 1902; the Wright brothers made their first flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, 1903; following a blizzard, New York received 27 inches of snow, 1947; following the closure of the Suez Canal, petrol rationing was imposed in Britain, 1956; after Arab guerrillas hijacked a West German airliner at Rome airport, 31 people were killed, 1973. Today is the Feast Day of St Begga, St Lazarus, St Olympius, St Simeon and St Wivina.

Lectures

National Gallery: Jacqueline Ansell, "Christmas Trees (iii): Caspar David Friedrich, *Winter Landscape*", 1pm. Victoria and Albert Museum: Julia Hunt, "Japanese Netsuke", 2.30pm. Tate Gallery: Justine Hopkins, "Sunshine, Chateaux and Drifting Water: Turner and the Loire", 1pm.

هَذَا من الأصيل

18/LEADER & LETTERS

Instincts at war: contempt for the poor and pity at their plight



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The politics are simple. The huge numbers, the jargon, the unfashionable subject-matter and (not least) the obfuscation of ministers give the impression that the disability benefits row is very complicated. In essence, it isn't.

The political dynamic can be seen on the streets of almost any major city. There are people begging. You pass. You have money. You feel irritation: you are a gritty person, a copter, a worker. Why should you give money to this idler, this sturdy beggar? Why don't they try harder? But you also feel something else: pity and unease. You feel "what-if-it-was-me?" and you feel suddenly superstitious about your own better fortune. These two basic social instincts are at war. So you give. Or you don't give.

That's what's going on. State welfarism veils the dilemma, hiding it behind the relative anonymity of mass provision, the complexities of different payments and the blatherings of politicians. But there are very simple warring urges at play.

Labour needs the money from squeez-

ing the welfare budget (or at the very least, to stop the increase). That means looking at disability payments, which have risen 200 per cent since 1978-9 in real terms and comprise about a quarter of the total welfare budget. Labour knows voters elected it to improve schools and hospitals without raising taxes. Now it has to find the money from somewhere. Not very disabled-people, it has decided, are one group which will lose.

This might translate into effective rhetoric if it came from a right-wing party. The Social Security Secretary would be on the radio talking about scroungers and layabouts, whipping up populist outrage and generally playing to that human instinct which passes the beggar with a shiver of irritation. It would be nasty and effective. Right-wing parties do this sort of thing all the time.

Harriet Harman doesn't use that language. She can't. Hers is not a right-wing populist party. It was founded to speak for that other instinct, the sense of pity, the

there-but-for-the-grace-of-God instinct. On top of that, Labour has encouraged and embraced the language of rights and citizenship. Disabled people don't want to be pitied. They follow where blacks, women and gays led, demanding their share of the social sunlight. They have articulate, angry and effective spokespeople. They are prepared to use direct action.

How can a party created partly from a sense of compassion, and now very close to the "rights culture", invoke words such as shirker and sponger to reach the voters and impress the Press? It just can't. This means that Tony Blair and Harriet Harman are engaging in a crusade to cut benefits without the moralising, populist language that would normally go with it. No wonder they sound abstract, oddly passionless and wooden-tongued on the issue.

So what is to be done? The state cannot and should not compensate for all the misfortunes and difficulties of life. Over time, responsibility for paying people who are injured or become sick at work should

pass from the state to employers, and thus, in effect, the insurance companies. That might save some £700m eventually. But it doesn't really answer the hard questions.

The only way ahead is to spend more, in the short term, on better inspection procedures, and to ensure that money is spent only on those who really need it. Cutting into the "middle-class welfare state" is absolutely consonant with the New Labour programme. Many better-off people will lose, and howl. But the balancing quid pro quo is that disability benefit would not be cut, but raised, for those who are really incapacitated. There needs to be, in other words, a sharper cut-off between citizens recognised as seriously disabled and needy, and those who are not.

At the same time, much more should be done about getting disabled people into work, using the stick not simply on individuals but on companies. This may lead to a national quota system, enforceable by law. We are not much in favour of new regulations and bureaucracies, but companies

are reluctant to employ the disabled and it looks futile to rely on exhortation.

Will all this radically reduce the welfare budget? Not soon, because of the huge number of disabled people who are already beyond working age, and because the change in culture cannot happen overnight. It is to be introduced humanely. Nobody who voted Labour in May did so hoping poverty to people already badly disadvantaged in life. And, we say again, these changes need to be accompanied by more generous benefits for the badly disabled.

Getting the balance right means mixing compassion and generosity with tough-mindedness about eligibility and need. It means that the Government has to persuade the country and the party that it is at least as worried about the living standards of the disabled as those of the anti-tax, better-off voter - but is also prepared to turf the minority of workshy off benefits. They don't give that impression at the moment. They'd better start.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Work and morals

Sir: My new Labour Party membership card for 1998 arrived in the post the morning after the vote on single-parent benefit. I ask myself whether I want to remain a member of a Party which can so dramatically reverse its previous opposition to this measure.

The new stance is based on the assumption that there is a major problem of welfare dependency which any sensible government would have to tackle. As a historian I am sceptical of this.

Every time there has been a collapse of the labour market there have been politicians who have claimed that the unemployed are suffering from some moral deficiency rather than from economic circumstances. Yet each time the labour market has subsequently revived "morals" seem to have shifted remarkably quickly as unemployment has fallen.

A policy of welfare to work, in the sense of facilitating the way back to work for those who want it, is quite right. But to treat this as a moral issue, and thereby justify the use of big sticks as well as carrots, is not what a Labour government should be about.

I will not be renewing my membership.
Professor JIM TOMLINSON
Brunel University
Uxbridge, Middlesex

Sir: While supporting the "big idea" of the present government that everybody should be given the opportunity to be employed rather than receive benefits, may I promote the balancing policy of a minimum income necessary for healthy living. This should also join the ranks of "big ideas".

The poorest 10 per cent in the United Kingdom are dying younger than they were. The reasons given have been stress and inadequate diet and health care. There has been no improvement in their life span since the 1920s. The rest of us are living longer.

There is a minimum income needed for a pregnant woman which will provide adequate nutrition for her and her unborn child. Failure to provide such an income in social benefits to the poorest families sets up a time bomb of physical and mental inadequacy which runs on through the generations.

Single parents, two-parent families, teenagers, pension-



ers and others need appropriate minimum incomes sufficient to ensure that nutrition is not diminished because of the needs for warmth, clothing, transport and other necessities.

Governments are, however, flying blind. They increase or reduce benefits and pensions, propose a minimum income, with no idea, big or little, of the weekly incomes needed for healthy living and an improved expectation of life for the poorest.

Let's stop perpetuating the damaging polarisation between better benefits and other anti-poverty policies. Each is necessary but not sufficient. They should all be seen as elements of a comprehensive strategy to enable people to move from the margins to the mainstream.

Chairman
Zeccheus 2000 Trust
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Sir: You say (leader, 9 December) that "a lump of cash, handed out by the state, does not make a poor household part of the mainstream". Perhaps it doesn't - by itself - although in a society in which "the mainstream" is made up of those with more money, it doesn't hurt help.

But an adequate income also makes the other steps out of exclusion that much easier.

It makes the transition to paid employment less of a risk - crucial for those with children especially. Recent research shows that lone parents suffering greater financial hardship were less likely to obtain a job. All the tasks of the new Social Exclusion Unit will be made that much more difficult if the energies of the people whose problems it is meant to be addressing are exhausted by the day-to-day struggle for survival.

Let's stop perpetuating the damaging polarisation between better benefits and other anti-poverty policies. Each is necessary but not sufficient. They should all be seen as elements of a comprehensive strategy to enable people to move from the margins to the mainstream.

Chairman
Zeccheus 2000 Trust
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Sir: To be a lone parent through no fault of your own is generally regarded as unfortunate. To choose to be a lone parent if one has no personal means of

support, nowadays looks like carelessness - many taxpayers may even say irresponsibility.

The social sanctions against illegitimacy which prevailed until quite recently represented sound, protective principles. The erosion of social sanctions and the absence of economic sanctions have had predictable consequences - none of them good news for taxpayers struggling to raise a family in traditional fashion. I hope I am not alone in supporting the Government's efforts to make young women think twice before choosing to become a lone parent.

Dr ANNE-CAROLE CHAMIER
Andross, Ross and Cromarty

Sir: Those who have rebelled against their party in the vote on benefits for single parents ought to remember that they have been elected not just to put in place the wishes of those who voted for them, or to exercise the ideology of their party, albeit the

"old" party, but to govern for the benefit of the whole people, a requirement forgotten in their time by their predecessors, much to their eventual cost.

JAMES MACKIE
Witley, Oxfordshire

Talking cure

Sir: One basic problem with the research on counselling to date is that the researchers are not always clear as to the nature of counselling or as to who or what is a counsellor ("What's so special about psychotherapy?", 9 December). Nevertheless, the special ingredient of counselling and psychotherapy is in the quality of the therapeutic relationship. It is not surprising that it is so popular with patients and GPs in medical centres where the GPs' time is at a premium.

What did Jeremy Laurance expect to be the outcome of the research? That counsellors were more effective than GPs? The fact that they are at least as effective may well disturb GPs,

considering the length and expense of their training. Certainly many of them welcome a counsellor as a colleague to assist in bearing the burden of the emotionally disturbed patient.

Counsellors and psychotherapists are not unaware of the need to "sharpen up" their professional skills and are collaborating in research. Perhaps the best evidence to date is the huge demand for counselling and patients' preference for the "talking cure" rather than drugs.

JOHN EATOCK
Vice-Chair, Counselling in Medical Settings Division, British Association for Counselling
Rugby, Warwickshire

Unfree information

Sir: A few years ago a number of leading Labour politicians and spokesmen from the Campaign for Freedom of Information supported a proposed Freedom of Information Act with the claim that it would mean that

the press would be able to uncover scandals such as "Arms to Iraq". They were naive.

The reality is that David Clark's proposal ("Freedom of information proposal gets high praise", 12 December) is loaded with so many exclusions - what does "national security" actually mean? - that in practice the press will still remain in the dark. The decision to exclude defence, foreign affairs and the security and intelligence services from its provisions means that this is a pale shadow of, for instance, the American Freedom of Information Act, which is itself deeply flawed.

I recently received a bundle of documents from US Army Intelligence on a number of deceased British politicians and individuals. I received them within six weeks of the request and it cost me not "a nominal fee of £10" but just the price of a stamp.

STEPHEN DORRIL
Holmfirth, West Yorkshire

Radio row

Sir: John Humphrys is not the only radio presenter who interrupts and denies his interviewees the chance to air their views to the listeners. ("Labour at war with Today", 13 December). It is getting worse.

I was desperate for information about the new student loan scheme and was delighted when I tuned in to an interview with Baroness Blackstone by Nick Clarke on *The World at One*. There I was, pen poised to write down the information hotline number which Lady Blackstone had promised us when, to my horror, Nick Clarke interrupted her.

The BBC has become obsessed with antagonism and analysis to the detriment of information.
BARBARA WILMER
Ness, Cheshire

Sir: The Harriet Harman interview seemed to me to be an attempt on the part of John Humphrys to get a straight answer. It seems that, when ministers consent to be interviewed, they are instructed to ignore direct questions, and to continue talking over the interviewer.

There can be no justification for an attempt to evade questions by bluster and threats. My pleasure at seeing the backs of the last government, who had forgotten that they were answerable to an electorate, is being rapidly diminished at the prospect that, in power, Labour is fast developing the same traits.

J OSRIN
London N2

Sir: If the Government pursues its pusillanimous threat to boycott the *Today* programme the losers will be not the listeners but the Government.
BRIAN MAYES
Sheffield

Busy Santa

Sir: Peter Baker ("Keeping Father Christmas fit for duty", 16 December) understates the burden S Claus willingly carries as a patron saint. He mentions children and sailors, but overlooks unmarried women, merchants, pawnbrokers, perfumers and the whole of Russia. Incidentally, might S Claus's longevity be the consequence of having refused his mother's breast on Wednesdays and Fridays.

JOHN EVANS
Marlow, Buckinghamshire

The Daily Inexorable, the paper that's polite to its readers!



MILES KINGSTON

Good morning.

And welcome to the only column in any daily newspaper which has the grace to say, "Good morning" to its readers.

Oh yes, there are many columns which will start out by saying: "How long can the Spice Girls last?" or "Come off it, Tony Blair!", but there is only one column which will say a simple "Good morning".

And that is this column. So, this morn (morn!) we say "Good morning".

Because we realise that the old niceties are not to be discarded and that there are people out there who like the old-fashioned exchanges of courtesy.

To them we say: "Good morning, ma'am, or it may be, sir."

We are proud of that.

We are proud of the older readers whose hands are encrusted with marmalade and whose nostrils react favourably to the aroma of bacon fat.

On the other hand we do realise the extreme importance of attracting younger readers.

We know that there are many readers under the age of 40 who, as soon as they hear the phrase: "Good morning, ma'am, or it may be, sir", will throw up.

What they want to hear is a modern, fresh-air greeting such as "Hi there, dude," or "Yo, friend!"

And to them we say: "Hi there, dude," and "Yo, friend!" So, there it is.

To the older readers we say, "Good morrow."

To the younger readers we say: "Hey there, dude!"

I think that takes care of the grown-up market, those who are old enough to be allowed to go out and buy a newspaper by themselves.

But what of the under-age market, those who are children of our readers, those who are aged 18 or less? Maybe 15 or less, or even 10 or less?

What of them?

Well, the received wisdom is that people of 12 or under don't buy papers.

That may be right.

On the other hand, that may be wrong. You see, people of 12 or under are already of the mental age to read many of our tabloids. They may be too old

at 12 to read *The Sun*. But other papers they are the right age for.

That is the market that we have to aim at.

The market that one day is going to grow up and say to itself: "Hey, what was the name of that paper that was so nice to me when I was a kid? Indefatigable, Inexorable, Indefensible, something like that?"

So, to that market we say this bright (or dull) morning: "Hi, kids! Hey, I like your haircut! Mark you, I don't like the way you dress or the sound of your music, but you'd hate it if I did, right? Because you can come to me for down-to-earth honesty! This is the column that tells it like it is! This is the newspaper column you can hate as much

as your parents - maybe even hate instead of your parents!"

Phew. Didn't enjoy that much, but had to do it.

That's the kind of column we are.

Of course, saying Good Morning isn't enough. We've got style but we need substance as well. Firm we've got, but where's the content?

Look, we're overflowing with content! Don't forget that this column has blazed its way through the newspaper jungle with a series of firsts which was greeted by the *What the Papers Say* awards with complete bafflement.

Don't forget that this is the column that bought Prince Edward out of the Marines. Don't forget that we were

the first ever people who brought you:

- a newspaper column licensed for the performance of marriage actually in the newspaper itself!

- details of the conditions on which Screaming Lord Sutch would form a coalition with Tony Blair if there were a hung parliament at the last election!

- Lord Spencer's real name!
- proof that the jobba and aloe vera plants do not exist but were invented by the pernicious cosmetics industry!

- compelling evidence that Sir Hugh Trevor-Roper's memoirs were fake!

- a report on a woman's magazine that is so free of sex that a man could read it without blushing!

- the shocking tale of a man who had the operation to become a woman, and then changed sex back to man because women's magazines were so in-your-face!

I think you get the idea. And now this is the point at which we traditionally shyly mention the name of the Christmas book which contains the best extracts from this column, in at attempt to make it a best-seller.

But there is no such book. Yes, this is a commercial plug without a product. Remember that, kids.

When you grow up, spend your money on the column that didn't try to take your money from you when you were young.

The exp



DONALD MACINTYRE
TALKS TO
THE LORD
CHANCELLOR

The Japanese

The expansive realm of Tony Blair's old master



**DONALD
MACINTYRE
TALKS TO
THE LORD
CHANCELLOR**

Sitting yesterday across the large table in his handsome office in the Lords, I asked the Lord Chancellor whether the real problem was that he was too big for his boots. Nobody doubts the extent of his power. But not everyone likes it. He chairs, sometimes rather brutally, a lot of the most important Cabinet committees. He does not, to put it mildly, hide his light under a bushel. On the one hand, he is admirably qualified for the job, as he well knows. Neil Kinnock would have made him Lord Chancellor. So would John Smith. But as Tony Blair's former pupilmaster and trusted mentor, isn't he rather too powerful for his own good? He is brisk and unfazed. "That is easy to say when I have all these Cabinet committees to chair. I think in the longer term when the current froth dies down, I will be judged by results."

So let's look at some of the froth first. An attack that has riled him exceedingly was the one on the £650,000 sprucing up of the official house in the Lords. He quoted at some length – from a 1986 text conveniently at his elbow – Margaret Thatcher warmly commending the importance of the Palace of Westminster as national heritage and, in particular, her pride in the similar – and at the time uncriticised – refurbishment of the Speaker's House. The equally "exciting" rolling programme of work in the Lord Chancellor's lodgings, agreed as it was before the election by an all-party committee, was no different. This is a famously fine art-loving Lord Chancellor, and it would be furnished for the first time with paintings and sculpture at present hidden in the cellars of country's great galleries – 19th-century works appropriate to Barry's architectural genius. Gibson's great sculpture *Narcissus*, for example, would gaze appropriately down at his own reflection in the Thames and behind it would be Sir Edward Landseer's magnificent portrait of the sculptor. This would be in effect be a "new public gallery on the Thames".

Public? Well, it would, for the first time, be open two afternoons a week to members of the Victorian Society and the



Lord Irvine, 'the workhorse of this Government', in his office yesterday

Photograph: John Voos

National Art Collections Fund, while scholars and other organisations would be able to visit on application at other times.

Did the wallpaper have to cost £59,000? It would cost no more than wallpaper elsewhere in the Palace and would last 40 years. "Even Lord Chancellors are entitled to a lick of paint and some new wallpaper when it's required... it will be within budget. But don't forget it needed to be substantially rewired. It needed smoke alarms. There is a mass of work that simply had to be done for maintenance and to make safe an important part of the Palace of Westminster. And also I'm afraid I think if a job's worth doing it's worth doing well it's not worth doing at all."

Now what of his notorious self comparison with Cardinal Wolsey? He didn't doubt that it would appear in his obituary. But this was not at all, he explains, the hubristic boast it is claimed to be, but a simple joke.

Here the Lord Chancellor sits beside me so that we can pore in detail over both the text of the after-dinner speech in which he made the remark, and the *Times* account of it. He compared himself with Wolsey in a jokey passage about past Lord Chancellors on the sole grounds that Wolsey had started the Star Chamber and he was chairman of a latter-day "Star Chamber", in the shape of the Cabinet committee on future legislation (OFL). He did also say, at the end of this passage, that "some of the earlier Lord Chancellors" illustrated

the fact that "in past centuries the Lord Chancellor had an important wide-ranging role, encompassing politics, religion, the economy and even military affairs." What he didn't do was conflate the two thoughts.

But didn't it strike a chord precisely because his relationship to Tony Blair is terrifyingly close to that of Wolsey's to Henry VIII? And that his all-encompassing writ does indeed range over politics, and if not religion, the economy and even military affairs? And that he wields all this power as an unelected politician?

Well, he saw it "rather differently". As chairman of many Cabinet committees, he was rather a "workhorse of this government". His experience of meetings with experts on a wide range of issues over the years made him a suitable chairman of OFL. And "I do actually think if you have practised for 30 years at the Bar in very difficult areas of the law, you do bring, certainly in the area of constitutional reform, a breadth of experience with you which I am enthusiastic to put at the disposal of the Government."

All the constitutional committees he chaired were interlinked; it was sensible to have a single chairman for them. "You mustn't understate the huge difficulty of this task. It's very, very major. There has been no equivalent programme of constitutional reform this century."

But hang on. This doesn't quite answer the question. Certainly he has all the qualifications to take on the "huge difficulty" of the task – except

one: nobody had actually elected him.

But, said Lord Irvine, wasn't a Lord Chancellor who was an experienced constitutional lawyer an appropriate person to handle constitutional reform? His predecessor Lord Mackay, who after all had been quite a busy man, hadn't chaired all these committees?

Well, actually, "James Mackay for whom I have very considerable admiration" might well have been the right person to do such a thing – except that such a thing hadn't arisen. And anyway his writ seemed to run

No, said Lord Irvine; first, he too had his own appearance before PX – and anyway he and George Robertson were "absolutely the best of friends... But if PX is to do its job properly... if there's any merit in questioning assumptions and received wisdoms, then it's got to its job professionally and vigorously. All my Cabinet colleagues have very broad shoulders."

What about rumours that he was bullied staff? "Well, you should go and ask them. I think you'll find that my private office all rather like me."

It was not true – as a news-

'The lady who gives me lunch sometimes peels oranges for me. The great public should be well pleased that I'm getting a daily diet of Vitamin C' – Lord Irvine

a good deal wider than the Constitution. Wasn't he, for example, a very prominent member of PX, the committee on public spending?

Ah well, that was because there was a direct link between the legislative programme and the comprehensive spending reviews under PX. But wasn't the truth that he acted as a sort of prosecuting counsel in these PX sessions with spending ministers? I had heard, for example, that he had treated one Secretary of State just like a prisoner on the dock...

"Which one?" Lord Irvine demanded swiftly. Well, since you ask, George Robertson, Secretary of State for Defence,

paper diarist had reported – that he had ordered one of his private secretaries to peel an orange for him. What happened was that "the lady who gives me lunch in this room every day when I have a salad over work also occasionally peels oranges for me. Well, she's very happy to. You should go and ask her. And I think the great public should be well pleased that I am getting a sensible daily diet of Vitamin C."

Finally, hadn't there been unease in the legal profession about the unexpected appointment as the Treasury Devil – the prestigious if not particularly well-paid barrister who works full-time for the Government –

of Philip Sales, who just happened to hail from his own former chambers of 11 King's Bench Walk? First of all, this was not his appointment at all but that of the Solicitor General, Charles Falconer, who knew the Bar backwards. "Charlie Falconer will tell you that there was a strong consensus that Philip Sales (a Double First with one of the largest and most impressive junior practices at the Bar in commercial, public and some European law) was the outstanding candidate."

We now turned to the persistent rumours that he was at virtually permanent loggerheads with Jack Straw and his colleagues at the Home Office. Lord Irvine reached for a sheaf of cuttings to deal with each reported *casus belli* in turn.

First, a *Daily Mail* report that Straw had scored a famous victory over him by ensuring that CPS lawyers would be able to appear in magistrates' courts without expensive barristers. This was a marginal question – "very small beer" – postponing the big issue of CPS lawyers' right to appear in all levels of the courts. All that had happened was that the original OFL decision to leave the legislation to the next session had been brought forward. "I doubt very much that Jack Straw will be claiming this as some kind of triumph. I take this opportunity to say that I have a good co-operative relationship with Jack Straw."

So given all these reports about his alleged interference, which he strongly denies, was someone out to get him at the Home

Office? "Oh, it's not for me to entertain such unworthy suspicions. Of course I don't."

But wouldn't he, as some of his colleagues have been known to claim, ideally want to preside over a Ministry of Justice, leaving the Home Office as a continental-style Ministry of the Interior? "I think this department is a Ministry of Justice. I think if you put a plaque saying Ministry of Justice outside the front door, I don't think anyone would be in the least surprised. But if you ask me if I have irreducible ambitions over the remit of the Home Office the answer is no. I think the secret is effective co-operative arrangements so policy is carried forward by discussion and agreement."

He is clearly proud of the role his Cabinet committee chairmanship played in the White Papers on the European Convention of Human Rights and the much more liberal than expected Freedom of Information Bill – and feels, perhaps, that they have not yet been given the recognition they deserve. He is equally adamant that his planned switch from legal aid to lawyers taking cases on a co-win, no-fee basis is a

great reform whose time has come. When you press him hard over about the widespread fears that the poor may not be able to persuade lawyers to take cases under the new system, there is just the hint of at least one modest concession on the way. First, as he has already made clear, there will be a Public Interest Fund to ensure that cases testing an important principle will still be protected. But he also let slip for the first time that there may be a "hardship" or "hard cases" fund to ensure that if poor litigants are denied access to justice – where they have a 75 per cent chance of success – they can go to court.

On Lords reform, he is not – in accordance with the iron principle that no Bill should be promised until it has been agreed by Cabinet – committing himself to legislation in the next session ending hereditary rights. But that should not in any way be taken as backing off. "Quite the opposite." It's clear that a Bill is still probable. Was there any chance that he would go a tiny way to meeting Tory anxieties – perhaps by allowing hereditary peers a handful of voting representatives but with their heirs precluded from the peerage? He will say only that every option will be considered that doesn't break the principle of Labour's outright opposition to hereditary rights.

Yes, he says, no doubt he has enemies. But everyone does. "I actually believe my relations with Cabinet colleagues are very good." His job driving forward policy on Cabinet committees – every one of which, he says in a typical Irvine-ism, has met its ambitious timetable – puts him in a potentially controversial position.

And look at all these cuttings he has assembled on the table. Isn't he a little obsessive about press criticism? "On the contrary, I am not in the least obsessive about the press. Having been a lawyer all my life I correctly anticipated that you would ask me about all these stories. You're just criticising me for being efficient."

So if Cardinal Wolsey is not the model – "Oh, for God's sake, I thought I'd persuaded you," he interjects with just a touch of asperity – was it more perhaps, as some have suggested, Willie Whitelaw, with his pivotal role in the Thatcher Cabinet? "It's for others to judge whether I'm as avuncular as Willie Whitelaw. I come from an entirely different source, as it were, from Willie Whitelaw. He was a very eminent figure. People tell me I am not emollient."

The Japanese economic model is no longer roadworthy

Forget about Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and the other East Asian "tiger" economies; it is Japan we should be worrying about. Even a light reader of newspapers will have been aware that many of the East Asian nations are in financial and economic difficulties, for hardly a day passes without some new dire item of news. For most people, the latest movement of the Bangkok bourse or whether Korea agrees with the terms the IMF is offering for a loan seems irrelevant. We may have learnt a new vocabulary of currencies, such as the baht, the ringit and the won, but the crisis hardly touches our lives.

Japan, however, is different. It is a much larger economy, of course, the second largest in the world. It happens to be an enormous foreign investor in the UK, revolutionising our motor and consumer electronics industries. It is also an economy, a society, which has had a profound practical impact on our daily lives. This is not just because we use the products it has developed every day: its cars, its TV sets, its VCRs, its cameras. It is equally because we have both been attracted by some of its ideas (for example, the emphasis on product quality or the egalitarian structure in factories) and disturbed by others (such as the lack of career opportunities for Japanese women, and the quality of life of many Japanese men).

Until four or five years ago Japan's economic prowess aroused a certain awe: it was the country that

seemed to be buying up most of America, but also the one that seemed to get through the recession without a surge in unemployment. Many people here envied the close relationship between companies and banks, and the education system that funnelled the brightest students into large companies.

Over the past few years, however, this perception has shifted. We are vaguely aware that things are not quite as good as they used to be, that Japan still seems to be in recession, that the banks and securities houses seem to be in trouble. However we have assumed that sooner or later things would perk up, just as they have here and in America – I certainly did, even though my Japanese friends would suck their teeth and explain that things were really still pretty dire.

In the past few weeks it has become clear that things have become still worse. There is a new economic package now being outlined in Tokyo, designed to boost the economy, but it is the third that the Liberal Democrats have introduced and the previous two have failed. Third time lucky, or three strikes and you're out?

The key elements of the package include a plan to support customers of financial institutions that go under, and tax cuts directed mainly at companies. There are not, however, any cuts in income tax, or any reversal of the rise in sales tax, which went up



**HAMISH
McRAE
ON THE FALL
OF JAPAN**

from 3 per cent to 5 per cent in the spring and was responsible for plunging the economy back into recession this summer.

To understand Japan's problem, think back to the last recession in the UK. We escaped because sterling came out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism and interest rates were cut: the first boosted foreign demand and the second home demand. In Japan there has already been a sharp fall in the currency, but much of the impact of the latest part of the fall has been blunted by even larger declines of other East Asian currencies. So in its fastest-growing markets, the yen's value has actually gone up. Until the autumn Japanese exports were doing very well now thanks to this increased com-

petition from the rest of Asia, plus the fall in demand there, prospects suddenly appear sombre.

At home, demand is flat. Why? Well, in the UK, a cut in interest rates would eventually jack up house buying, and prices, and we would then fill our houses with new things. In Japan, they can't really cut interest rates any more as the official rates are below 2 per cent. The housing market is less fluid, partly because people do not move so often and partly because there are great rafters of regulations which inhibit new building. There is no impetus to spend more on consumer goods because these markets have reached saturation point: once you have four TV sets you do not really want a fifth; if you possess two high-technology loas (which squirt warm water up your backside) you do not need a third. Besides, there is no room.

It is very easy for an outsider to see how demand in Japan might be stimulated: by having a bonfire of regulations. Perhaps the most damaging are those that affect land use: some, for example, prohibit building larger houses, while others protect inefficient builders and discourage new construction methods. Privately, senior Japanese people admit that the main thing strangling domestic demand is excessive regulation, justified on the grounds of social cohesion. Ultimately, deregulation gives a great boost to an economy, but since in the short-term regulations protect

jobs, progress in lifting them is slow. Until a few months ago it seemed, however, that a consensus was building that Japan had to change, and deregulation is a very large part of that change. You could see Japan in the early stages of a process similar to that which took place in the US and UK, but done in a more consensual way. Gradually, over a decade or more, Japan would bring in transparent financial markets, proper accounting, looser building regulations, privatisation, more entrepreneurship – all the things that have helped to stimulate demand in the US and UK. Japan would change, but without the sometimes searing social tensions that we have had here.

Gradual change would have been fine if luck were on Japan's side. But it isn't. In the past few weeks the collapse of East Asian economies has created a new urgency. The country cannot rely on exports. Somehow it has to jack up domestic demand.

It is funny, isn't it? All the old virtues, the "save, don't spend" culture, the big companies with their disciplined workers, maybe even the social cohesion, if the price for that is heavy regulation – all these virtues now seem to be almost vices. The very things that made Japan successful now seem to be holding it back. They need to be less puritan, more epicurean. Just as 30 years ago we needed to become more like them, now they need to become more like us.

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Watchdog attacks the Pru's 'culture of non-compliance'

Prudential was yesterday given its second public flogging in less than two months by City regulators angry at a 'culture against compliance' which had led to serious management failure and mis-selling to customers. As Andrew Verity reports, it was the nadir of a nightmare year for Britain's largest insurer, which has been lambasted by regulators, press and Government alike.

In its first important public statement, the new super-regulator, the Financial Services Authority, attacked "a deep-seated and longstanding failure in management which prevented Prudential Assurance from recognising its own shortcomings".

The FSA said the Pru had failed to address and remedy grave defects in the operation of its direct sales force which it had already been warned about. There was, the FSA said, "a cultural disposition against compliance which filtered through Prudential Assurance's branch offices, their managers and advisers".

The Pru had been more concerned with the cost of complying with the Financial Services Act than it had with the interests of its customers, the regulator said.

Sales people at Prudential Assurance, the corporation's life insurance subsidiary, had conducted mis-selling while its management had failed to put in place procedures and controls designed to protect customers. The Pru had failed to keep important information about customers and their financial aims and failed to give customers all the right information. It had not acted with due skill, care and diligence and had failed to arrange its compliance properly.

"Prudential Assurance's conduct has fallen substantially below the standards that the public have a right to expect from a regulated firm," the FSA statement said.

The mis-selling referred not to personal pensions, for which the Pru has already been scolded, but to a further arrangement, a with-profits endowment plan called the

Prudential Savings Account. Salespeople sold the product despite the fact that non-taxpayers would be taxed more heavily than with an alternative such as a PEP.

The revelation of fresh mis-selling by the Pru, which first surfaced in *The Independent* last May, followed a January compliance visit in which regulators complained they were shadowed by Pru compliance staff who gave hand signals to warn staff when not to speak.

The Pru, which in May insisted mis-selling of the Savings Account was confined to its Sheffield branch, is now understood to have been forced to extend an internal investigation of the misold product to its entire sales force. Management consultants McKinsey have now been brought in to shake up the company.

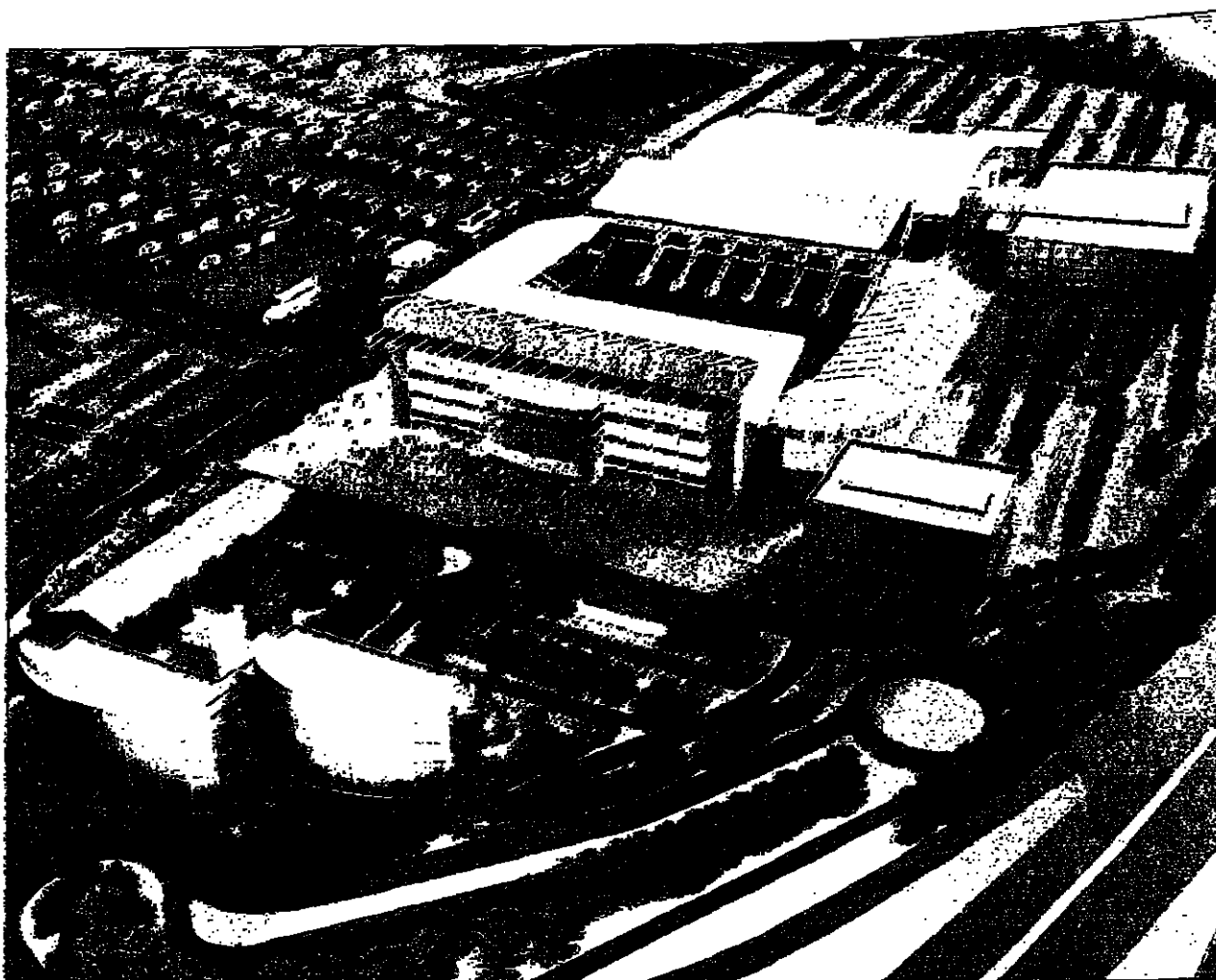
The then compliance director, David Limell, was replaced by Martin Brownstein in March and later left the company in May - a departure which the company insisted was amicable and unconnected to mis-selling allegations.

Further casualties - viewed by some industry observers as fall guys - followed. Jim Sutcliffe, then chief executive of Prudential Assurance, left the company suddenly in September following a disagreement with group chief executive Sir Peter Davis over a radical restructuring plan, thought to have been prompted by continuing regulatory attacks.

Soon after, the insurer was publicly attacked by Helen Liddell, economic secretary to the Treasury, and the FSA's predecessor, the Securities and Investments Board, over its failure to compensate victims of pension mis-selling, many of whom were overlooked because they had died.

John Elbourne, Mr Sutcliffe's number two at Prudential Assurance since November 1996, yesterday offered a contrite acknowledgement of the Pru's failure in its duty to customers, saying the company was working "extremely hard to ensure problems can be put behind us". He said: "I still believe that the people at the Pru want to be compliant. I think they generally felt they were doing all the right things."

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Football club for the future: Leeds United Holdings' vision of its new state-of-the-art £40m arena

Caspian unveils huge Leeds arena plan

Caspian, owner of Leeds United football club, yesterday unveiled plans to create the biggest sporting and entertainment arena in the country after Wembley. Leeds is spending £40m developing a huge arena next to its Elland Road ground.

The new complex will open by 2000 and hold at least 180 events a year. The 14,000-seater arena will show Leeds Lasers Superleague ice hockey games and basketball matches. The rest of the time it will be host to pop concerts, entertainment extravaganzas on ice, hit theatre shows and conferences and exhibitions. City analysts estimate the arena's box office could take around £15m a year, similar to Manchester's huge Nynex centre.

Situated between the M1 and M62 motorways, the 50-acre scheme will include a new 200-bedroom hotel and a range of themed bars and restaurants. Caspian is opening talks with hotel and drinks groups to build the facilities and its bankers to finance the deal. The plans also involve the

redevelopment of the West stand at the Elland Road stadium, which will increase the ground's seating capacity from 40,000 to 45,000.

Lengthy delays in agreeing the deal were linked with the departure of Robert Launderson, Caspian's former chief executive. However, Leeds Council has finally agreed to let Caspian acquire the majority of the 50-acre site for £11.3m. The deal includes the acquisition of the freehold of Elland Road and the arena site which is currently a car park. The group plans to take control of the rest of the site shortly. Caspian is changing its name to Leeds United Holdings, reflecting the importance of the new scheme.

Chris Akers, Leeds chairman said: "This is a big club with a big name. Our aim is to create one of Europe's leading sports, leisure and media groups."

Caspian made a pro-forma loss of £6.2m for the year to June, having spent a net

£11.8m on new players and incurring a 12 per cent rise in its wage bill. Since the year end it has also splashed out another £3.5m on players but said it had more money to strengthen manager George Graham's squad.

Caspian confirmed plans to set up its own pay-TV channel by the start of the next football season. But it has not chosen which broadcaster to team up with and is still in talks with several parties including Granada and BSkyB.

Leeds continues to talk with other clubs on the Continent to create a joint merchandising and media business. It also hopes to sign a deal soon with a Far East group to distribute its club merchandise in Asia.

Leeds plans to take advantage of the growing popularity of its internet website by selling advertising. The site has already attracted 1 million internet surfers a week.

— Andrew Yates

Bass sells off 1,400 pubs in £564m deal

Bass announced yesterday the sale of most of its tenanted pub estate for £564m as part of the massive restructuring of the group which will see it launch a £850m share buy back and still have room for a £1bn-plus acquisition. As Andrew Yates reports on a deal which brings together two of the most successful figures in the restaurant industry.

Bass is selling 1,428 pubs to Roger Myers, who created Pelican, the Cafe Rouge and Dome restaurant group and Hugh Osmond, one of men behind the success of Pizza Express.

The pair are poised to embark on a shake-up of the estate involving the creation of several new pub restaurant brands and themed bars.

Mr Osmond said yesterday: "Brewers have been spending money expanding their sexy pub managed while the tenanted estates have been neglected. Some of these pubs have not been changed for 20 years. There are a lot of opportunities to improve their performance."

Bass has now raised a total of £800m in the last few days with the sale of the pub estate coming hot on the heels of the disposal of its Gala bingo business. It plans to buy back £850m of its shares, or 11 per cent of its market value. However it still has a sizeable war chest and is understood to still be looking for hotel acquisitions in the Far East.

Bass will now concentrate on expanding its managed pub estate, and rolling out brands such as All Bar One and its O'Neill's Irish bars.

City analysts believe that Bass got a good price for the pubs and its share price rose 4p to 899p yesterday.

Mark Puleikis, drinks analyst at Merrill Lynch said: "Bass could still easily go out and spend £1bn tomorrow if it wanted to. It has done well to get out of two of its two weakest businesses for a good price."

However some City observers believe that the decision by Bass to give money back to shareholders suggests that it has run out of acquisition targets. "It is a surprise they gave this money back to shareholders so soon. It shows that they could not find anything else to spend it on," said one analyst.

Mr Osmond has made several million pounds from selling shares in Pizza Express and My Kinda Town, the Henry J Bean's group he was also involved with. Now he has put most of this personal fortune into the pub venture. "I haven't got much left," he said.

Luke Johnson, Mr Osmond's partner at Pizza Express, is also taking a stake in the business. Mr Osmond is expected to step down as an executive director of Pizza Express to concentrate on the new pub business.

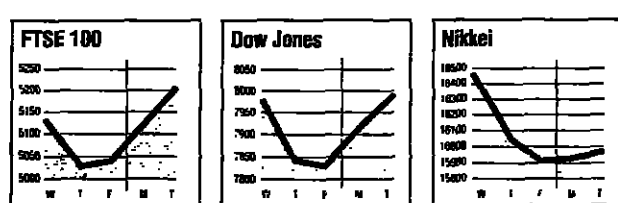
He will be joined at the new pub company by Alan McIntosh, who worked with Mr Osmond on the flotation of Topps Tiles earlier this year and was described yesterday as "a good old Scottish accountant."

The partners are backed by BT Capital Partners, the private equity arm of Bankers Trust, and the new pubs are likely to be added to the 845 strong Phoenix pub estate Mr Osmond bought from Nomura, the Japanese banking giant, last month.

Randy Shure of BT Capital said: "The brewers are nearly at the end of their disposal programme and they have saved the best for last. The business is a tremendous cash cow and we believe we can create real growth by putting the cash back in the business." The new group is likely to be floated on the stock market within five years.

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STOCK MARKETS



*Down Jones Index and graph at Sun

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5203.40	81.60	1.59	5367.30	3970.80	3.36
FTSE 250	4757.00	-5.00	-0.13	4963.80	4358.30	3.48
FTSE 350	2483.10	31.10	1.26	2570.50	1973.90	3.38
FTSE All Share	2431.52	38.41	1.58	2507.68	1949.45	3.38
FTSE Smallcap	2298.80	-1.10	-0.05	2407.40	2127.50	3.44
FTSE MedCap	1255.20	1.30	0.10	1346.50	1203.60	3.41
FTSE AIM	973.70	-0.50	-0.05	1136.00	965.90	1.11
Dow Jones	7958.95	75.35	0.95	8299.03	6236.05	1.71
Nikkei	15085.21	75.82	0.48	20910.79	14956.13	0.96
Hang Seng	10346.38	-88.77	-0.85	16820.31	8775.88	4.10
Dax	4083.97	23.93	0.59	4459.89	2802.83	1.99

INTEREST RATES



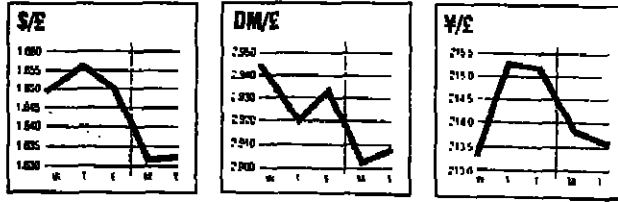
Money Market Rates

Index	3 month	1 yr	10 year	1 yr swap	1 yr swap	1 yr swap
US	7.73	1.34	7.75	0.87	5.28	1.34
UK	5.91	0.36	6.00	0.24	5.79	-0.58
Japan	0.75	0.31	0.72	0.14	1.91	-0.69
Germany	3.75	0.51	4.04	0.74	5.29	-0.58

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg	Falls	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg
Wycomed Amer	2285.00	180.00	8.63	Danica Bus Syst	217.50-292.50	-57.35	
Abbey Natl	1147.00	90.00	8.51	MIR Furniture	118.00	-7.00	-5.63
Lasmo	285.00	20.00	7.55	Biocompatibles	565.00	-27.50	-4.83
Penins and Orient	695.00	39.00	5.95	Securicor	294.00	-13.00	-4.25

CURRENCIES



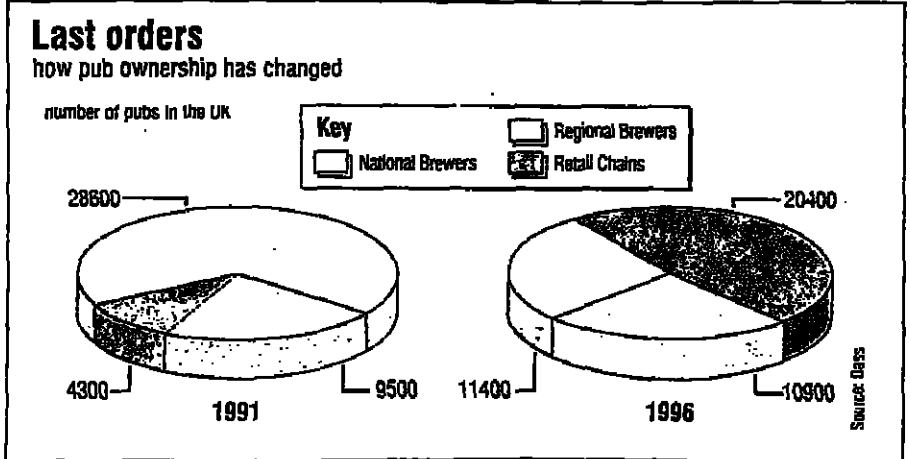
Pound

Index	Close	Chg	% Chg	1 yr Ago
Dollar	1.6325	+0.16c	1.6337	0.6126
D-Mark	2.9096	+1.85pt	2.5770	1.7835
Yen	213.53	+0.22	189.81	130.80
E Index	102.40	-1.30	94.00	108.50

OTHER INDICATORS

Index	Close	Chg	% Chg	1 yr Ago	5 yr Ago
Brent Oil (\$)	16.84	-0.08	23.58	113.90	3.60
Gold (\$)	285.45	1.70	368.10	159.60	3.70
Silver (\$)	5.84	-0.12	4.81	7.25	6.00

www.bloomberg.com source: Bloomberg



National Express told to shed Scottish coach group

Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, has a reputation for championing competition over commercial interests. But, as Randeep Ramesh reveals, yesterday's report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) into National Express' rail and coach empire saw her instincts snubbed.

National Express Group (NEG) would have to sell off its £12m Scottish Citylink operation, which provides long-distance coach services north of the border, Mrs Beckett said. The company runs ScotRail, which operates train services in Scotland.

The decision followed publication by the MMC's report, which concluded there were nine routes where subsidiaries of National Express operated coach services that overlapped with ScotRail train services and that might be expected to lead to "an increase in coach fares compared with current levels".

The MMC also decided that National Express owning Central Trains, which ferries passengers around the West Midlands, and operating local bus services in the area did "not operate against the public interest".

The MMC report vindicates the officials at the Office of Fair Trading (OFT). Just three weeks after taking office, Mrs Beckett flexed her regulatory muscles by overruling John

Bridgeman, the director-general of Fair Trading, and referring the two National Express acquisitions.

Mr Bridgeman advised that neither the takeover of ScotRail, the train company that runs services north of the border, nor that of Central, a franchise which ferries passengers around the West Midlands, should be sent to the MMC.

The OFT said that the ScotRail acquisition should be referred only if National Express did not divest itself of its coach company Scottish Citylink - a move which the panel of experts at the MMC endorsed.

NEG will not lose any sleep over the decision. Last year the group made a record profit of £62m on a turnover of £480m. Scottish Citylink contributed a pre-tax profit of £1m on sales of just £12m. ScotRail received nearly £300m from the Treasury this year to run services.

NEG executives were pleased with the decision concerning Central Trains. "The Government really recognises the benefits that we are achieving from an integrated transport system," said Colin Childs, NEG's finance director.

Mr Childs said he was "disappointed" by the MMC's decision on Scottish Citylink. "We would have preferred some sort of behavioural undertakings," he added.

Citylink will now be sold to a buyer within the next six months and it will be allowed to increase its scheduled coach services within Scotland for the remainder of the ScotRail franchise agreement.

Jazz FM owners to bid for Melody Radio

Golden Rose Communications, owner of the radio station, Jazz FM, is understood to have put in a bid for Melody Radio, the London station controlled by Hanson.

Hanson, which has been refocusing on building materials put Melody up for sale last month, and a number of companies submitted bids at the end of last week. Melody, an easy listening station which broadcasts on FM, could be worth around £18m, and would present Golden Rose with an opportunity to extend its jazz brand.

Other bidders could include Capital Radio, which last week lost out to Chris Evans' Ginger Productions in the battle for Virgin Radio. GWR, Scottish and Chrysalis are also possible contenders. Richard Whentley, group chief executive of Golden Rose, would not comment on Melody, but the company has made no secret of its desire to grow through licence applications and acquisitions.

Mr Whentley yesterday unveiled losses before tax of £987,400 for the year to the end of September. Last year's profits of £257,000 were inflated by a £3m gain from the sale of Viva!, the

ailing women's station. Operating losses were reduced from £3.5m to £1.1m.

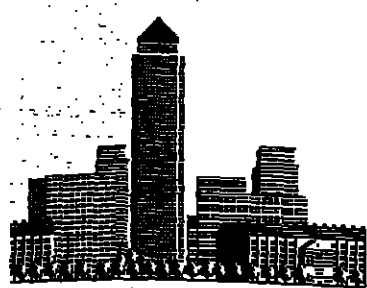
Golden Rose has been extending the Jazz FM brand into related merchandise such as records. A new double album compilation is due out in January, to co-incide with a big marketing campaign for the station. A themed restaurant in Liverpool, the Café Jazbar, opened in April. Further restaurant openings - part of a joint venture with Regent Inns - will follow next year in London and the North-west, where Jazz FM broadcasts.

Mr Whentley, who joined Golden Rose two years ago, at a time when the group was suffering from its decision to set up Viva!, said yesterday he was pleased that the operating losses had been reduced.

The London Jazz FM station grew revenue by 25 per cent, while advertising sales in the North-west franchise were seven per cent higher than in the previous year. Sponsorship income meanwhile increased by 184 per cent to £704,000, and several blue-chip companies became sponsors of the two stations for the first time.

— Cathy Newman

British Government to proceed with ice cuts



OUTLOOK ON THE FSA'S CENSURE OF THE PRUDENTIAL TWO TEST CASES OF COMPETITION POLICY, AND THE MINIMUM WAGE

About as damning as it comes for the Pru

The wheels of officialdom grind slow but the wonderful thing is the way they usually get there in the end. Yesterday's public censure of the Pru over the antics of its 5,000 strong direct sales force by the Financial Services Authority, is about as damning as they come.

This partly reflects the inability of the FSA to levy fines on those whose conduct falls below acceptable standards. In the absence of an exemplary fine to demonstrate the degree of its unhappiness, the FSA is prone to throw both the book and the sausage, calculating that the damage to commercial reputation will be just as grave.

Think of a financial instrument - life assurance, unit trusts, pensions - and the Pru sells it. Think of a regulatory shortcoming and the Pru has been guilty of it - failure to train, deep seated and long-standing management failures, a cultural disposition against compliance, unsuitable sales, failure to remedy previously identified defects. You sort of get the picture.

The man from the Pru, Sir Peter Davis, has been preparing for the onslaught since the FSA's hit team went in last January appointing compliance directors, overhauling the structure of the business and finally throwing Jim Sutcliffe, head of the domestic life assurance business overboard in September and taking direct control of the UK retail businesses himself. As a final olive branch, he even volunteered to join the Personal Investment Authority, something his predecessor, Mick Newmarch could not bring himself to do.

But the question that is rather left hang-

ing is whether Sir Peter could and should have acted earlier. By May of next year he will have been at the Pru for three years. Many of the shortcomings that the FSA identified in January were the same failings it had noted in 1995 and 1996. The reason for yesterday's public censure lies in the Pru's failure to act on a stream of earlier warnings.

If there is a fig leaf in the statement of censure it is the FSA's acknowledgement of the wide-ranging corrective action embarked on by the present management. This was enough to lift the spirits of the market, which took it as a clean bill of health for the new look Pru and decided to ignore the FSA's more ominous reference to "the extent to which redress is appropriate" in respect of past business which has been misold.

This is a long way from a ringing endorsement of the new regime. The Pru and Sir Peter have been put on notice that further failures on the scale of those which have previously taken place will not be tolerated. Now that it is part of the PIA, the Pru can be fined and now that Sir Peter has taken personal charge the buck will stop with him.

Mrs Beckett scores one out of two

It was a day of mixed fortunes yesterday for Margaret Beckett. The President of the Board of Trade must rightly have felt

rather pleased with herself as she woke up to the news that Bass is selling off 1,428 pubs - the best part of one-third of its estate - to a trio of entrepreneurs best known for bringing pizzas and French fast food to the masses.

She may have been feeling a little less sprightly when the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report into the National Express takeover of two rail franchises was published a few hours later.

To take brewing first. Mrs Beckett has now been vindicated entirely in her decision to block the Bass takeover of rival brewer Carlsberg Tetley, a deal which would have given it almost 40 per cent of the market.

In order to obtain regulatory clearance, Bass had offered to dispose of a large chunk of its pub estate. However, yesterday's deal suggests it was contemplating such a move anyway for commercial reasons. Add in the rationalisation of brewing capacity that has also taken place since the block was put on Bass and the picture is one of a more efficient production and more competitive retailing of beer without the need for one company to control four in every ten pints pulled.

The MMC's decision to wave through National Express's acquisition of Central Trains and ScotRail provided it disposes of its competing Scottish bus company, Citylink, makes less pleasant reading. Mrs Beckett referred both bids against the advice of the Director-general of Fair Trading, John Bridgeman. In the case of ScotRail, he actually suggested that any con-

cerns could be overcome through the sale of Citylink. All in all, then, Mrs Beckett has wasted six months of everyone's time.

Maximising benefits of minimum wage

Most reasonable people can accept that there is a good case to be made for the introduction of a national minimum wage. The arguments, as the Commons demonstrated yesterday when the Government's Bill had its first reading, concern the specifics. One issue is the level. Is the low pay commission going to recommend something closer to the unions' bizarre target of half median male earnings of above £4? Or to the employers' pitch for something less than £3.50?

The answer matters because the impact of a minimum wage on jobs depends very precisely on how its level compares to how much employees are worth to their employers. Sometimes the introduction of a minimum in low-paid areas can actually increase employment by improving the incentive for people to take jobs. This is precisely what the Chancellor wants it to achieve.

Too high a level, on the other hand, will cost some low-paid workers their jobs. If their pay reflects their productivity, a higher minimum wage will price them out of work. This problem is most likely to arise with young and inexperienced employees whose productivity is genuinely low. The evidence from

economic research in several countries is clear: too high a minimum for people in their late teens and early twenties can dramatically raise youth unemployment.

This is why some members of the Government and low pay commission are in favour of an exemption for young people. Apart from anything else, it would make the welfare-to-work programme for young people more expensive and less effective if they had to be paid too high minimum wage.

The economics dimensions of the choice are clear. Either there has to be a youth exemption to the national minimum or the level must be set low enough not to price young people out of work. The former looks unfair and is politically unattractive. The latter makes the policy less effective for the rest of the workforce.

A likely compromise is to link an exemption for the under-26s to the provision of training, which would make it clear why they did not yet qualify for the minimum. The trouble with this is that it is much harder to police - any canny employer would set up a training programme that satisfied the letter of the law, and the potential for disputes would be enormous.

So the hard choice facing the Government is economic and administrative common sense versus political practicalities. But so important is it to Gordon Brown to demonstrate that he is getting more people into jobs that he is unlikely to opt for a version of the minimum wage that risked putting young people out of work. The economists will win this one.

Burton reveals chief at Debenhams made £2m profit on shares

The chief executive of the Debenhams department stores, which are set to be demerged from the Burton Group next month, received £2.63m last year including salary and profits from share options. However, as Nigel Cope, City Correspondent, reports, the sale was due to personal reasons and does not reflect his view of Debenhams' prospects as a separately quoted company.

Terry Green made a profit of almost £2m on share options cashed in last March, according to the Burton annual report published yesterday. This was in addition to his annual pay of £662,000, a rise of almost 16 per cent.

However, the company denied that Mr Green's decision

to sell almost all his options reflected a lack of confidence in Debenhams' future prospects. It is understood that Mr Green was recently divorced and has bought another house.

Mr Green, and the rest of the Debenhams board, will be allocated fresh share options in Debenhams though the levels have not yet been announced. Other Burton directors will be able to carry over their share options. The biggest beneficiary is John Hoerner, the Burton chief executive who will be the chief executive of Arcadia, the re-named multiples business. He holds options worth more than £3m.

It also emerged yesterday that Peter Jarvis, the former Whitbread chief executive who will be the non-executive chairman of Debenhams, will be paid an annual salary of £170,000 for two days' work. Mr Jarvis defended the pay package, saying it had been decided by the remuneration committee. The annual report also showed that Stuart Rose, who left Burton after failing to

win a top job in the de-merged group, was paid compensation of £582,000.

The details came as the listing particulars of Debenhams were published. These showed that Mr Green would be paid £350,000 as chief executive. The four executive directors will receive an annual bonus of approximately two thirds of their basic annual salary. The share split will see Burton shareholders receive one Debenhams share and two shares in Arcadia for every eight Burton shares held.

Debenhams plans to spend £350m on store modernisation and open 10 new stores over the next five years. It will introduce more designer brands and hopes to improve still further its margins which already stand at 10 per cent.

An emergency meeting to vote on the de-merger will be held on 22 January. Shares in the two companies are expected to start trading on 26 January.

Burton shares edged 2.25p higher to 143.25p



Debenhams duo: Terry Green, chief executive (left) and Mathew Roberts, finance director

Photograph: Rui Xavier

Jobless rate divides expert opinion

Unemployment can fall further from its current 17-year low without re-igniting inflation, according to some optimists about improvements in the jobs market. Not so, says a new report which claims the jobless rate has got as low as it can. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, reports on the controversy.

Unemployment below the current rate of 7.1 per cent would be unsustainable, even though the threshold below which falls in joblessness trigger inflation has fallen in the past decade. The evidence for this claim, in a report published today by the Employment Policy Institute, will disappoint those who have argued that deregulation and flexibility in the jobs market have significantly reduced the "structural" unemployment rate.

With figures due today likely to show both the headline rate and the more reliable survey-based measure of unemployment still falling, the optimists will point to the fact that pay rises have remained low despite the tight jobs market. Economists expect average earnings growth to have picked up slightly, but it will remain at around 4.5 per cent despite the fact that unemployment has fallen to its lowest for 17 years.

The authors of the new report, Ray Barrell and Rebecca Riley of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, say this is due mainly to the effect of the strong pound in keeping pay and price rises low. This, rather than a fundamental change in the structure of the jobs market, accounts for the surprisingly subdued wage growth, they say.

This is not to say that the sustainable unemployment rate has not fallen at all. Looking at long-term flows into and out of unemployment, the paper puts it at around 7 per cent now compared to 8.9 per cent during the 1980s. The improvement is due mainly to an increase in the size of the skilled workforce since the late 1980s. The effort to get more young people into higher education has significantly increased the number of graduates entering the workforce - a conclusion that will cheer the present Government, which is also emphasising the importance of education and training.

Second-attempt at float to value Monsoon's founder at £300m

Former encyclopaedia and marketing salesman, who started his retail career selling Afghan coats in a London market, will be worth more than £300m when his Monsoon fashion chain comes to the stock market early next year. As Nigel Cope, City Correspondent reports, it is the group's second attempt at a float.

Peter Simon, who founded Monsoon in 1973, owns 96 per cent of the group, which is expected to be valued at around £350m when it comes to the main market. He will be selling a quarter of his stake, realising £87m, but says he does not really need the money.

"I'm not broke now," he said. "I'm not going to go on a great spending spree. I have simple hobbies, like sailing. But I'm not into big boats."

Monsoon pulled its float in July last year after a disagreement with

its broker BZW. The dispute centred on Monsoon's largest shareholder, the Malta-based Sycamore Trust, which then held 67 per cent of Monsoon's stock.

That trust has since been disbanded with the stake acquired by two Guernsey-based trusts operated on Mr Simon's behalf.

NatWest Markets is acting as the company's broker this time and the value of the business has soared from its £250m valuation 18 months ago.

Monsoon was founded by Mr

Simon, 48, who was born in Sri Lanka during a mass exodus - hence the name.

The first store opened in London's Beauchamp Place, specialising in garments sourced from the Far East. He had discovered the shirt, a cross between a sheep and a goat on a trip to Gozo. Local workers developed a shaggy coat which Mr Simon began importing to Britain.

Monsoon now has 103 stores in the UK and a further 24 overseas, selling women's clothing, accessories and childrenswear.

Mr Simon said that Monsoon planned to open around 30 new stores a year and could double in size without saturating the market.

Monsoon also owns the Accessorize format, which sells fashion accessories such as jewellery, hats, and cosmetics. It has 179 branches, of which 103 are within branches of Monsoon. The Accessorize chain has four stores overseas.

The group made operating profits of £25.4m on sales of £107.9m last year. It has increased trad-

ing profits in each of the last 12 years. No new money is being raised via the float and Monsoon's staff and customers will not be able to buy the shares until after it has floated as the shares are only being placed with institutions.

Mr Simon said that he would have liked to have come to the market via an open offer but that the group's financial advisers had said it would prove too costly.

Mr Simon said the float would enable Monsoon to retain and attract top managers.

Government reforms cheer South Korean markets

South Korea's stock market and currency continued their cautious recovery yesterday, as confidence grew in the government's resolve to carry out the economic reforms agreed as part of the rescue package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Share prices plummeted last week, after the leading candidate in tomorrow's presidential election, Kim Dae Jung, said that he would renegotiate stringent conditions attached by the IMF to its \$57bn bail-out. He reversed his position over the weekend, and since then the Korean government has taken a series of market opening and liberalisation measures.

The Seoul stock exchange's composite index rose 4.78 per cent to 404.26 yesterday, despite news that a large pharmaceutical company, Shin Poong, had been suspended from trading after it defaulted on repayments.

The Korean won closed at 1,425 to the dollar compared with 1,564 on Monday, when the government lifted the trading band and allowed the currency to float freely.

The most immediate causes of market optimism were a series of financial reform measures announced by the government in compliance with the IMF agreement.

Overseas investment in UK continues to rise

Foreign investment in the UK surged for the fifth year running in 1996, according to official figures, although new UK investment overseas fell below the previous year's level. The statistics will comfort those who feared the Asian crisis spelled doom for inward investment prospects. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, explains.

New direct investment by foreign companies in Britain amounted to £16.1bn in 1996.

This was the highest inflow since 1990 - and a £3.4bn increase over the previous year despite the first leg of the pound's rise against other currencies and growing concerns about Britain opting out of the single European currency.

The pattern of flows reveals that European investors have become increasingly more important to the UK compared with both Asian and American investment. Despite their high profile, Japanese and other Asian projects have amounted to only a small part of the total.

The rise took total foreign investment to £139.9bn, and increased foreign companies' earnings in the UK to a record £14.4bn.

Luckily for the balance of payments total, British companies earned much more from their investments overseas. Earnings rose by £3.4bn to £27.3bn in 1996.

However, the rise in new UK investment abroad was 20 per cent lower than the record level it had reached in 1995, at £22bn. This took the total to £209.1bn - still in excess of the value of British assets owned by foreign companies. Britain remained one of the world's biggest outward investors as well as one of the biggest recipients of inward investment.

There was a substantial fall in British investment in North America last year, although investment in other European

Union countries and developing countries increased. The Netherlands was the most popular destination for British businesses, followed by France, emphasising the growing importance of the European market.

European companies in turn increased their stake in the UK, led by the Netherlands and Switzerland. New investment by American companies diminished, although the US continued to be the biggest investor with an inflow amounting to £7bn.

Japanese investments in the UK had a book value of just over £8bn at the end of last year, on which Japan earned just £147m during the year.

Japanese inward investment has been far lower than, say, Australian investments during the past five years. But 1996 did see a new inflow of £390m from Japan, nearly offsetting a £379m reduction in investment the previous year.

High-profile projects by other individual South-east Asian countries remained too small relative to the total to register in the aggregate figures, but new inflows from all the other Asian countries excluding Japan added up to £319m, well above 1995's increase of £190m. This left their value at the end of last year at £2.5bn, or about the same as the value of Swedish and Danish investments in Britain.

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY PETER THAL LARSEN

Decision time over Burton

It is nearly make your mind up time for shareholders in Burton Group. The merger of the Debenhams department stores will take place in a month's time and investors, who have already been advised by this column not to sell ahead of the split, now need to decide whether to hang on to shares in Debenhams, the remaining multiples business, to be renamed Arcadia, or both.

Following the merger, shareholders will receive two Debenhams shares and one Arcadia share for every eight Burton shares held. After yesterday's publication of the listing particulars, analysts were upgrading their estimates of the relative valuations. Some are targeting a price of 172p for the two parts, compared with yesterday's closing price of 143.25p, up 2.25p. They value Debenhams at 112p – a 15 per cent premium to the market – with Arcadia accounting for the remaining 60p. The choice for investors is between Debenhams, a highly rated business with a solid track record, and Arcadia, which potentially has more upside but also carries more risk as its record is patchy.

Debenhams certainly looks the safer bet. Its margins are already running at 10 per cent and every additional percentage point gained adds another £10m to profits. The chief executive, Terry Green, reckons there is much more to go for. He plans to boost profits by rationalising the supplier base as well as cutting back on discounting to spend more weeks of the year selling at full price. A £350m capital expenditure programme will pay for 10 new stores in the next five years and upgrade the remainder of the 88-strong chain.

At the multiples business, which includes Top Shop, Principles and Dorothy Perkins, the challenges are greater. Margins are only 5 per cent and the chief executive, John Hoerner, is likely to shuffle the store portfolio by converting less profitable formats into the fledgling Racing Green brand. Mr Hoerner also wants to shift selling space towards womenswear, which already accounts for 60 per cent of sales.

The challenge will be to avoid the problem which has dogged the multiples in the past, which is that whenever the difficulties of one format are

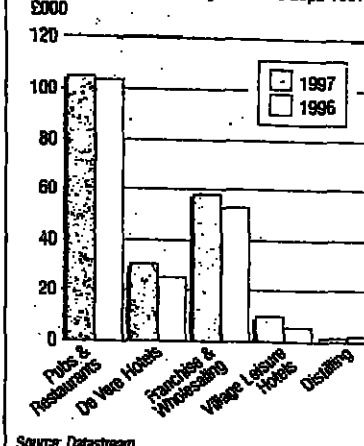
Greenalls: At a glance

Market value: £1.25bn, share price 422.5p (+14)

Five-year record	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Turnover (£bn)	0.60	0.72	0.77	1.15	1.14
Pre-tax profits (£m)	68.0	74.8	100.7	117.4	137.7
Earnings per share (p)	29.4	26.6	36.9	32.1	35.9
Dividends per share (p)	12.36	13.10	14.20	15.40	16.71

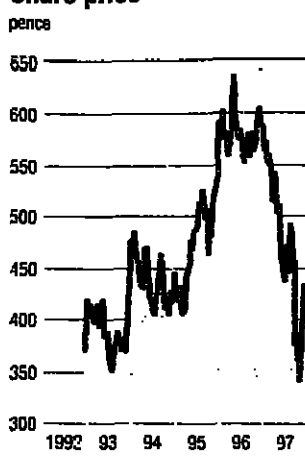
Operating profit

By class of business, for year ended Sept. 1997



Source: Datastream

Share price



resolved a fresh set of troubles seem to emerge elsewhere.

So hang on to shares in Debenhams, even though the valuation could soon look quite full. Arcadia, with its weaker brands, is more for braver souls who are seeking a recovery play.

Green shoots at Greenalls

Investors in Greenalls breathed a sigh of relief yesterday. Growing concerns that its pub estate in the North-west was going from bad to worse following a warning on summer trading, had sent the share price spiralling downwards in the last few months. But Greenalls' announcement that sales are beginning to recover calmed traders' nerves and the shares jumped 14p to 422.5p.

Nevertheless, Greenalls' problems are far from over. It is increasingly clear that the group paid too much for the Boddington pub estate two years ago.

It has been saddled with more than its fair share of poor houses, which are struggling to compete with the themed pubs that are springing up around the country.

That said, Greenalls is doing the right things to overcome the difficulties. Having been guilty of under-spending on its own brands, the group is doing all it can to catch up. It has sold off some of its worst pubs and the policy of shifting some of the poorly performing managed outlets to its tenanted estate is already paying off.

Even so, the investment will take time to bear fruit and Greenalls may have difficulty getting good locations in the scramble for new sites. All this means the short-term earnings outlook for the pub estate remains subdued.

Greenalls' leisure businesses should more than take up the slack. Its De Vere hotel operation and travel lodges are going great guns, buoyed by the upswing in the provincial hotel market which still has some way to go. The Village Leisure hotel and health club business is another jewel, and a chain

of fitness clubs is on the way. Analysts forecast current year profits of around £170m, putting the shares on a prospective p/e ratio of less than 10. If Greenalls' management fails to come up with the goods, industry predators are lurking. Good value.

Pound hammers Kenwood

Shareholders in Kenwood must be fuming. A year ago, the troubled electronic appliance maker received an informal approach from Pifco, its smaller but more successful rival. At the time, Kenwood's shares traded at around 200p. The talks broke down, however, and since then Kenwood's shares have plummeted. They closed down 6.5p at 111.5p yesterday.

Not that Kenwood can complain. Interim results showed a 16 per cent slide in sales and operating profits. Chief executive Colin Gordon, the former Grand Met man who took over in February, argues that the strong pound wiped £1.9m off profits. Given that the currency is actually squeezing export sales – rather than just reducing the value of overseas earnings – this amounts to saying that Kenwood would be fine if only it wasn't doing so badly.

To be fair, Mr Gordon seems to have the right idea. He's farming out basic manufacturing to subcontractors, cutting unprofitable lines, and hiking prices for the more popular products. This should have been done five years earlier, but that's hardly his fault.

Is this a turning point? Certainly, margins should pick up as cost-cutting and price increases feed through. But any recovery will be slow and painful. Currencies will continue to hurt and Kenwood remains burdened by a £47m mountain of short-term debt. Mizushi, its Italian subsidiary, is being run at a loss because it is too expensive to close and no one wants to buy it.

Brokers forecast full-year profits for Kenwood of £8m, implying a forward p/e ratio of 12. That leaves the shares looking fairly valued. Shareholders can hang on in the hope that, now the size of its target has halved, Pifco plucks up the courage to mount a hostile bid. But it's hard to see what a predator could do that the current management isn't doing already.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

LEA PATERSON



Do I hear the rumbles of discontent at the Department of Trade and Industry? The DTI, rumour has it, is set to lose its first senior civil servant since Labour's election victory. John Michell, the director of oil and gas, is understood to be taking early retirement at the tender age of 55. Sources say that Mr Michell plans to pursue a better-paid career in the private sector.

Mr Michell's decision to leave has, according to some colleagues, nothing to do with the change of Government. Apparently Mr Michell "got on like a house on fire" with John Birt, the industry minister. But others pointed to recent shifts in emphasis over consumer policy, with Mr Birt pushing for guarantees that the poor would not lose out following the introduction of domestic electricity and gas competition. It seems that Mr Michell, regarded by many as one of the main architects of Tory energy policy, has been absent from recent meetings with the minister. One source reckons Mr Michell has been "a bit of a fish out of water" since the election.

Mr Michell, a career civil servant, came to prominence three years ago over claims that he had received red roses from Clare Spottiswoode, the gas regulator. The allegations (she did send him flowers, but not roses) came at the height of the "cold war" between the regulator and British Gas. More recently, relations have thawed considerably, a development for which Mr Michell can claim much of the credit.

A heart-warming seasonal touch from the New Labour Treasury, Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, has departed from the normal departmental practice of putting an ancient snowy oil painting or cartoon of some distinguished deceased chancellor on the Christmas card in favour of up-to-the-minute drawings by children related to Treasury staff.

Two winners, Nicholas Gibbs, aged 7, and 9-year-old Kier Ferguson, were awarded prizes at a ceremony at Number 11 Downing

Street last week. Along with a tour of Downing Street, they each got a £50 voucher from Toys'R'Us and had their original artwork framed, gaining an important early lesson in the rewards of hard work. One prize-winning picture shows multi-coloured stars. The other has Father Christmas scattering cash from a sack in his sleigh.

On reflection, it's not a very New Labour theme, but who can blame the Chancellor for being unable to resist such a charming scene?

Charles Fry, the workaholic chief executive of Johnson Fry, is standing down after 28 years in which he has built up one of the most successful financial advisers in the country, now worth £20m, from scratch.

Mr Fry, grandson of the former England cricket captain CB Fry, will have plenty to do, with a large portfolio of his own to manage.

He founded the financial adviser in 1969 with his partner Michael Johnson – who dropped out of the business a few years later – as a two-man business. Within 20 years the company was ready to float, and set about making the company's name as the biggest arranger of Business Expansion Schemes.

It was soon snappily up by London Investment Trust, which ran into severe financial problems. Soon Johnson Fry was the only viable part of the business.

The company was again hit in 1995 when the Government put an end to BESs. Like a chameleon, Mr Fry again transformed the company. Rebecca Thomas, aged just 33, was appointed as managing director and set up the top-performing Slater Growth fund – among others. Mr Fry will stay on for two days a week to give his sage advice on marketing. But meanwhile he's having a well-earned rest in Tobago.

For a thriving powerhouse of accountancy and management consultancy, when it comes to marketing the mighty Arthur Andersen has always been a bit more backward about coming forward than some of its rivals. After all, when revenue has grown at rates comfortably into double digits for year after year, it is presumably easy to let the figures speak for themselves.

But now, possibly feeling threatened by the Big Six mega-mergers involving KPMG, Ernst & Young, Coopers & Lybrand and Price Waterhouse, it has appointed one Matthew P. Goring to the grand-sounding post of managing partner-communications and integrating marketing (whatever the latter is). A veteran of government and airlines, 42-year-old Mr Goring will report directly to Jim Wadia, the Chicago-based firm's first non-US head man.

One can only wonder how this "communications management" expert will mesh with John Newton, the jovial, jazz-loving City insider who has looked after the firm's affairs in the UK for as long as anybody can remember and is much more of the nudge-and-a-wink school.

Demand for new mortgages eases

The demand for new mortgages has begun to fall for the first time since 1995, according to figures released yesterday by Barclays Mortgages. The data adds to earlier economic evidence from the Treasury which has eased pressure for a further interest rate rise. Andrew Verity reports.

Barclays said it believed the housing market had now corrected from the slump of the early 1990s. But it added that further strong growth was now unlikely.

Jim Chadwick, marketing director, said: "The slight fall in lending should not be a cause for concern. Growth so far this year has been very healthy and we knew that the surges we saw last year could not be sustained long-term."

"Waning confidence is probably due to the year's interest rate rises. People need to realise that rates have now probably peaked and it is safe to consider moving or buying a house for the first time."

Lending in November

slipped to £6.7bn, down by 4 per cent from its October level of £7.0bn. The company's mortgage index, which measures how much business has been done by all mortgage lenders, showed a slight fall of under 1 per cent last month in comparison with October last year.

More business is still being done compared with last year, but the growth of business has slowed down sharply. As recently as September, mortgage lending was over 10 per cent higher than in 1996. November was the first month which which lending fell year-on-year since September 1995.

Meanwhile, Halifax, the country's biggest mortgage lender with a 20 per cent share of the market, is boosting the interest paid on savings accounts from 1 January by at least 0.25 points. The savings rate rise follows a similar boost to Halifax's variable rate mortgages, to 8.7 per cent, following the Bank of England's quarter-point rate rise in early November.

But Halifax's rates on savings and current accounts still remain at least 2 percentage points below those of supermarkets and building societies such as Bradford & Bingley. For amounts less than £5,000, its top rate is 4.5 per cent a year – against 6.8 per cent at Bradford & Bingley.



First Choice, the UK's third-largest holiday maker, confirmed yesterday that the holiday market was booming as it announced its best ever start to the new season with summer bookings up a quarter compared with last year. The group also plans to capitalise

on the growing popularity of cruises by offering its 1.6 million customers new holidays in the Mediterranean for summer 1999.

The announcement comes a week after rival Airtrips announced its bookings were storming ahead of last year.

First Choice's underlying pre-tax profits more than doubled to £22m in the year to October. But the discovery of an accountancy error under the previous management team wiped £8.6m off the bottom line.

— Andrew Yates

Government borrowing rises but spending stays on target

The Government borrowed £2.3bn in November. Although this was a little more than the City had expected, it left the total for the financial year so far at £4.8bn and easily on course for the Treasury's target of £9.5bn for the full financial year.

Some economists believe the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, could do even better, so tough has he been at cracking down on public expenditure. Spending by government departments is down 1 per cent this year, rather than rising 1.7 per cent as forecast – and this despite inflation that has been higher than expected when Kenneth Clarke, the former chancellor, set the current cash totals for public spending.

Jonathan Loynes, an economist at HSBC Markets, said: "Barring a very large splurge at the end of the year, it now looks certain that spending will under-shoot the official forecasts significantly." Adam Cole at James Capel, predicted the PSBR could be as low as £5bn in the current year.

With spending reined in, lower revenues accounted for the somewhat disappointing November figure for the public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR). Total government tax receipts for the first eight months of 1997/98 were 5.2 per cent lower than the same period a year earlier.

— Diane Coyle

Ernst & Young passes KPMG in accountancy firm rankings

Ernst & Young has leapfrogged KPMG, the firm with which it is planning to merge, to become the world's second-largest accountancy firm, with total fees for the past year of \$9.1bn (£5.6bn), according to figures just published.

The firm, headed in the UK by Nick Land, reached the runner-up position through recording a rise in fee income of 16.7 per cent. This was the only increase in revenues that approached the 19 per cent posted by Andersen Worldwide, the global number one, says International Accounting Bulletin.

The journal, which published its annual accountancy firm ranking yesterday, points

out that, although Andersen faces losing its top spot if the E&Y/KPMG merger goes ahead, it continues to grow faster than any of its main rivals. Last year, the combined revenues of the two business units – Arthur Andersen and Andersen Consulting – totalled \$11.3bn. KPMG saw revenues rise 11.1 per cent to \$9bn.

Coopers & Lybrand, in fourth place, saw fees rise 10.7 per cent to \$7.5bn, while sixth-placed Price Waterhouse, the firm it is planning to merge with, recorded a 12 per cent rise to \$5.6bn. Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu was in fifth place with fees of \$7.4bn.

— Roger Trapp

US markets boosted as inflation fears subside

Signs that US inflation remains tame boosted the US financial markets yesterday by removing any residual fear that the Federal Reserve might raise interest rates at its last Open Markets Committee meeting of the year. Consumer prices rose just 0.1 per cent in November, trimming the annual inflation rate to 1.8 per cent. "Core" prices, excluding volatile food and energy components, also rose 0.1 per cent during the month. A 0.7 per cent drop in transport prices thanks to lower air fares explained the smaller-than-expected increase.

Wall Street economists expressed relief that early signs of pressure on wages had not fed through to prices yet, although some remain convinced the Fed will have to raise rates during the first few months of 1998 as inflationary pressure build in the jobs market. Separate figures showed new house-building starts up unexpectedly last month. The number of new homes started climbed 0.8 per cent, reaching an annual rate of 1.53 million units. Low long-term interest rates are boosting the housing market.

RBS takeover clears hurdle

The Department of Trade and Industry yesterday cleared the Royal Bank of Scotland Group's proposed £630m takeover of Birmingham Midshires Building Society. RBS, Britain's ninth-largest bank, said in August it would buy Birmingham Midshires to increase its branch network in England and its mortgage lending throughout the UK. The acquisition must still be approved by Birmingham Midshires' members and the Financial Services Authority, the financial regulator that will come into being next year. Analysts had not expected a referral since the combination would result in less than 5 per cent of the UK mortgage market.

Profits on target at Wickes

Wickes, the building materials company, yesterday said it expected operating profit for the year to 31 December to be in line with company expectations given the sales performance to date and the "successful" control of costs. Wickes said market conditions "remained satisfactory" during the second half of the year, adding that like-for-like sales growth in its UK business for the 48 weeks to 29 November was 10.2 per cent. "As anticipated, like-for-like sales growth in the second half of 1997 was slower than that achieved in the first half as the company traded against stronger second-half 1996 sales comparatives," Wickes said.

Peter Black buys Ferrosan

Peter Black Holdings, the healthcare and footwear group, has bought Ferrosan (UK) Ltd from Ferrosan AS of Denmark for a maximum consideration of around £35m. Both Ferrosan and Peter Black Healthcare are suppliers of vitamins, minerals and supplements to the UK market. The deal is being funded in part by placing 5 million new Peter Black shares at 370p each, raising around £18.5m. In the year ended 31 December 1996, Ferrosan (UK) had turnover and pre-tax profit of £19.9m and £2.3m, and adjusted net assets at that date were £4.5m.

Portfolio bought up

Liberty International Holdings has bought the balance of 30 per cent of Portfolio Fund Management it did not already own. "Portfolio is the leading specialist fund of funds unit trust manager," said Liberty.

COMPANY RESULTS				
	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Abertis Asset Man (F)	22.21m (19.63m)	3.69m (6.08m)	2.64p (5.08p)	3.75p
Astra (I)	78.95m (103.5m)	0.525m (-63.45m)	(2.47p)	(-)
Care UK (F)	27.57m (21.67m)	12.34m (3.52m)	25.88p (6.79p)	1.25p (1.0p)
Campion Group (SP)	23.24m (22.78m)	-3.27m (-6.23m)	-1.52p (-2.27p)	(-)
Companystead UK (F)	10.30m (7.69m)	0.389m (0.199m)	5.68p (+)	0.65p (+)
Equidion (I)	(-)	1.406m (0.538m)	3.85p (1.56p)	2.0p (2.0p)
First Choice (F)	1.02m (1.01m)	22.0m (8.3m)	5.4p (1.9p)	2.8p (2.8p)
Greenalls (F)	977.0m (951.1m)	157.3m (148.7m)	41.72p (40.28p)	16.7p (15.4p)
Kenwood (F)	81.46m (97.63m)	2.2m (3.3m)	3.5p (4.9p)	nil (3.25p)
Kerr Brown (F)	300.46m (57.55m)	-40.6m (-73.8m)	-0.37p (-0.82p)	(-)
Securicor (F)	1.35bn (1.25bn)	31.4m (107.4m)	2.7p (11.5p)	1.74p (1.56p)
Todd (F)	2.9m (2.7m)	-1.12m (-2.46m)	-4.15p (-14.3p)	(-)
Universal Salvage (I)	37.36m (26.09m)	1.0m (2.3m)	2.48p (5.52p)	1.65p (1.65p)
Unitas (I)	23.82m (22.77m)	2.2m (-0.42m)	2.7p (-0.21p)	0.4p nil
Zargo Holdings (I)	5.37m (4.67m)	0.78m (0.165m)	0.3p (0.5p)	(-)

(F) = Full (I) = Interim 1 EPS is pre-exceptional * Dividend to be paid as a FID

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Sun Life/Canada Century Eq	181.00	181.00
Sun Life/Canada Century Mgd	152.70	152.70
Sun Life/Canada Equity Acc	706.60	698.70
Sun Life/Canada Mgd Acc	827.80	765.40
TSB Equity	517.00	514.30
TSB Homebuyers	302.00	298.00
TSB Managed	316.00	310.00

261 +
 SERVICES
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Ascot lowers ceiling and raises prices

Royal Ascot retains its popularity as the Flat season's favourite fixture and in an attempt to reduce overcrowding, the course executive is to further restrict attendance. Richard Edmondson reports.

The vexed topic of attendance figures was again on the racing table yesterday. At many of Britain's racecourses, where unpalatable racing is served by similar facilities, there is a struggle to raise a quorum.

Ascot does not have that problem and yesterday the course executive revealed plans to counteract a different situation. Too many people, it seems, want to attend Royal Ascot, and next summer, the numbers allowed on to the course will be 20 per cent fewer than last June.

The Royal meeting now welcomes 230,000 people over four days, a mass that can be managed quite nicely thank you as long as the weather remains clement. When it becomes stormy, however, the picture, and the colour of your trouser bottoms, changes. The crowd reduction comes largely following dirty Thursday earlier this year, when ladies' day, the busiest day of the meeting, was met by continuous rain. The chosen dress pattern for the afternoon seemed to be mud-spatter as many who had paid good money for the experience found their new tops lasting just a few hours out of the box.

Visitors will have to pay more money this year (£55 a day in the Royal enclosure and £42 a day in the grandstand, although there are concessions for early bookers), but there will be fewer people with whom to jostle and more refuges should the skies open once again. Double-decker marquees will be going up, with catering, television and betting facilities to take your mind off matters al fresco while raindrops are plopping from the awnings.

The message, already, appears to be book early. Advance bookings are available from 2 January and, last year, the accommodation was greater, the grandstand enclosure for ladies' day was sold out within two weeks. Beware, there are people out there who know how to plan their lives.

The Ascot executive can also bathe in an annual attendance figure for 1997 which, at 452,100, is already ahead of the 1996 figure. And that is with Saturday's Betterware Cup meeting still to come.

There were some (ok, I mean me) who might have made a snap judgement when a chap called Douglas Esken-Crum was appointed as Ascot's racecourse director. Dougie, as I'm sure he'll let me call him from now on, is, however, rather different from your average racing administrator. He does not treat the public as a bit of a nuisance who have turned up to ruin his private sports day.

It is easy to tell the difference. Some clerks of the course at major racing venues such as Newmarket dreamily observe

you as the equivalent of bubble gum on the sole. Ascot's clerk, Nick Chayne, and Dougie, always seem to be in a state of nervous alertness as if they are frightened that they might be doing something wrong. They care, and so do others about coming to their racecourse.

It seems inevitable then that the Berkshire track's latest initiative, the Royal Ascot Racing Club, will be a huge success. Esken-Crum launched it yesterday with the rather modest pledge that this would be "the greatest racing club in the world". He does, though, have a glimmer of justification.

Subscribers, of which there will be a maximum of 300, will be allowed use of a club room behind the current Iron Stand for which the word luxurious is probably too understated. Canapés and drinks will be complimentary, as will Ascot racecourse admission throughout the year. Viewing at the course will be from a private stand, and an exclusive restaurant will also be available.

In addition, the Club has already bought six two-year-olds at an average cost of £50,000 which will be split between the Messrs Stoute, Hannon and Chapple-Hyam. There will be stable visits to check the horses are still alive, dedicated phone lines to the group manager and regular reports on the bloodstock. And just in case you think one small detail may have been omitted, the perfect late stocking filler for your loved one is available for a knockdown £8,812.50.



One Man (left), Richard Edmondson and Desert Orchid get on nodding terms at Greystoke stables yesterday

Photograph: John Giles/PA

The grey heir to Desert Orchid's crown comes face to face with the past master

Can One Man go three-quarters of the way to measuring up to Desert Orchid and win a third King George VI Chase on Boxing Day? Physically, at least, he was able to look the old champion in the eye yesterday when the two came face to face during a visit by Desert Orchid

to One Man's territory of Gordon Richards' stables at Greystoke in Cumbria.

It was Desert Orchid who really caught the eye, though, despite his 18 years. "I hope One Man will look as well when he is 18 and today, as always,

Desert Orchid looked a bit of a hand-ful for his lass," John Hales, One Man's owner, said.

Richards said: "I would love to have trained Desert Orchid. Who wouldn't have loved to have had a good horse like that. He stayed the night here and it was

wonderful having him. He looks in great order and nice and happy. One Man was pleased to see him too and I am quite pleased with our grey horse after riding him this morning. He is coming along nicely and looking a million dollars for the King George."

Court fancied for Irish prize

Ted Walsh's Triumph Hurdle winner, Commanche Court, has been installed as the 10-1 favourite with the sponsors for the Ladbrokes Hurdle at Leopardstown on 10 January. The chestnut, one-length conqueror of Circus Star at Cheltenham, is a top-priced 12-1 with William Hill and Coral.

Ladbrokes rate the chief British hope as Maurice Camacho's Alabang, a good third

EXETER

1.20 Totallity Yours
1.50 Jefferees
2.20 Mystere

2.50 Boots Madden
3.20 Walter's Destiny
3.50 Bold Statement

GOING: Good to Soft (Good to Soft in places).
● Right-hand, undulating course. Stiff test of stamina. Run-in of 250 yards.
● Course is 5m SW of Exeter on A30. ADMISSION: Grandstand & Paddock £10; Silver Ring £5 (separated by 150 ft). CAR PARK: £2 on race day; £1 on other days.
● LEADING TRAINERS: M Phipps - 67 winners from 255 runners (25.3%); Miss H Knight 33 from 170 (19.4%); P Hales 25 from 125 (19.9%); R Frost 10 from 96 (10.4%).
● LEADING JOCKEYS: A P McCoy 20 wins from 125 (16.0%); J P Taylor 12 from 216 (5.6%); M Fitzgerald 10 from 100 (10%); P Hales 10 from 64 (15.6%); J P Taylor 9 from 40 (22.5%).
● FAVOURITES: 100 wins in 105 races (95.2%).
BLINKERS FIRST TIME NONE.

1.20 OSPREY CLAIMING HURDLE (CLASS F) £2,600 added 2m 2f Penalty Value £1,953
1. 2803 KING OF THE BLUES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 3040 SHAMBAH (4) (C J O'Connell) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
3. 3040 SHAMBAH (4) (C J O'Connell) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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9. 3040 SHAMBAH (4) (C J O'Connell) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
10. 3040 SHAMBAH (4) (C J O'Connell) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

1.50 MERLIN NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 2m 2f Penalty Value £4,078
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
3. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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8. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
9. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

2.20 HOECHST EBF MARES NH NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS D) £4,600 added 2m 3f 110yds Penalty Value £3,705
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
3. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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9. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

2.50 HARRIER HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,700 added 2m 2f Penalty Value £2,982
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
3. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

3.00 HARRIER HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,700 added 2m 2f Penalty Value £2,982
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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3.30 HARRIER HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,700 added 2m 2f Penalty Value £2,982
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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3.50 HARRIER HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,700 added 2m 2f Penalty Value £2,982
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

4.00 HARRIER HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,700 added 2m 2f Penalty Value £2,982
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

4.30 HARRIER HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,700 added 2m 2f Penalty Value £2,982
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
3. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

5.00 HARRIER HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,700 added 2m 2f Penalty Value £2,982
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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9. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

BANGOR

12.40 Brumton 1.10 Deano's Beano 1.40 Mountain Path 2.10 Albert The Lion 2.40 Slideoffhill 3.10 Jymjam Johnny 3.40 Jalon

GOING: Chases - Soft; Hurdles - Good (Good to Soft in places).
● Left-hand, undulating course, run-in 325yds.
● Course is 1 mile SE of Bangor near junction of A55 and B5058. Run from Bangor station. ADMISSION: Paddock £5; Course £4 (under 16s free at all enclosures). CAR PARK: Free.
● LEADING TRAINERS: Mrs M Reveley 17-22 (20.7%); M Hammond 10-14 (16.7%); L Longo 9-48 (18.8%); Mrs S Smith 9-50 (13.3%).
● LEADING JOCKEYS: P Niven 23-30 (28.9%); R Garrity 14-32 (17.1%); A S Smith 13-59 (22.4%); T Reed 10-75 (13.3%).
● FAVOURITES: 105-327 (9.9%).
BLINKERS FIRST TIME NONE.

12.40 RED COAT CONDITIONALS HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS F) £3,500 2m 1f
1. 2803 KING OF THE BLUES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 3040 SHAMBAH (4) (C J O'Connell) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
3. 3040 SHAMBAH (4) (C J O'Connell) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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10. 3040 SHAMBAH (4) (C J O'Connell) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

1.10 ASTBURY WREN HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS B) £7,000 added 3m
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

1.40 CLUVOY NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 2m 4f 110yds
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

1.00 HEILSTER NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) £4,500 added 3m 1f 110yds
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

1.30 RAYFAR HOUSE SELLING HURDLE (CLASS F) £2,500 added 2m 3f
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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2.00 RACING CHANNEL HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS F) £3,500 added 2m 3f
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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9. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

2.30 RACE CLUB AMATEURS HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS F) £2,700 2m 3f
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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3.00 GARTH NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) £4,500 added 2m
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

3.30 HUTTON WANDELS NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS F) £2,700 2m 3f
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
3. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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9. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

4.00 HUTTON WANDELS NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS F) £2,700 2m 3f
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
2. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
3. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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9. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
10. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey

CATTERICK

1.00 Clabrell 1.30 Once More For Luck 2.00 Judicial Field 2.30 DISTANT STORM (nap) 3.00 Shining Edge 3.30 Lumbuck Lady

GOING: Good (Good to Soft in places).
● Left-hand course, undulating and sharp. Run-in 300yds.
● Course is NW of town on A635. Derrington race station 14 miles. Service to course, ADMISSION: Club £1; Terraces £2; Course £2.50 (under 16s free at all enclosures). CAR PARK: Reserved area. 22, remainder free.
● LEADING TRAINERS: Mrs M Reveley 17-22 (20.7%); M Hammond 10-14 (16.7%); L Longo 9-48 (18.8%); Mrs S Smith 9-50 (13.3%).
● LEADING JOCKEYS: P Niven 23-30 (28.9%); R Garrity 14-32 (17.1%); A S Smith 13-59 (22.4%); T Reed 10-75 (13.3%).
● FAVOURITES: 105-327 (9.9%).
BLINKERS FIRST TIME NONE.

1.00 CLABRELL NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) £4,500 added 3m 1f 110yds
1. 6031 JEFFERIES (4) (M Phipps) J King 5 11.1 C Bailey
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Sheffield to be at centre of plan for regional excellence

The proposals for a new United Kingdom Institute for Sport signal a change to a more coherent sporting strategy. Mike Rowbottom reports.

The revolution is underway for British sport. Yesterday's announcement that the United Kingdom Institute for Sport - once referred to as the Academy of Sport - would be housed in Sheffield marked an important stage in the overhauling of the whole sporting system.

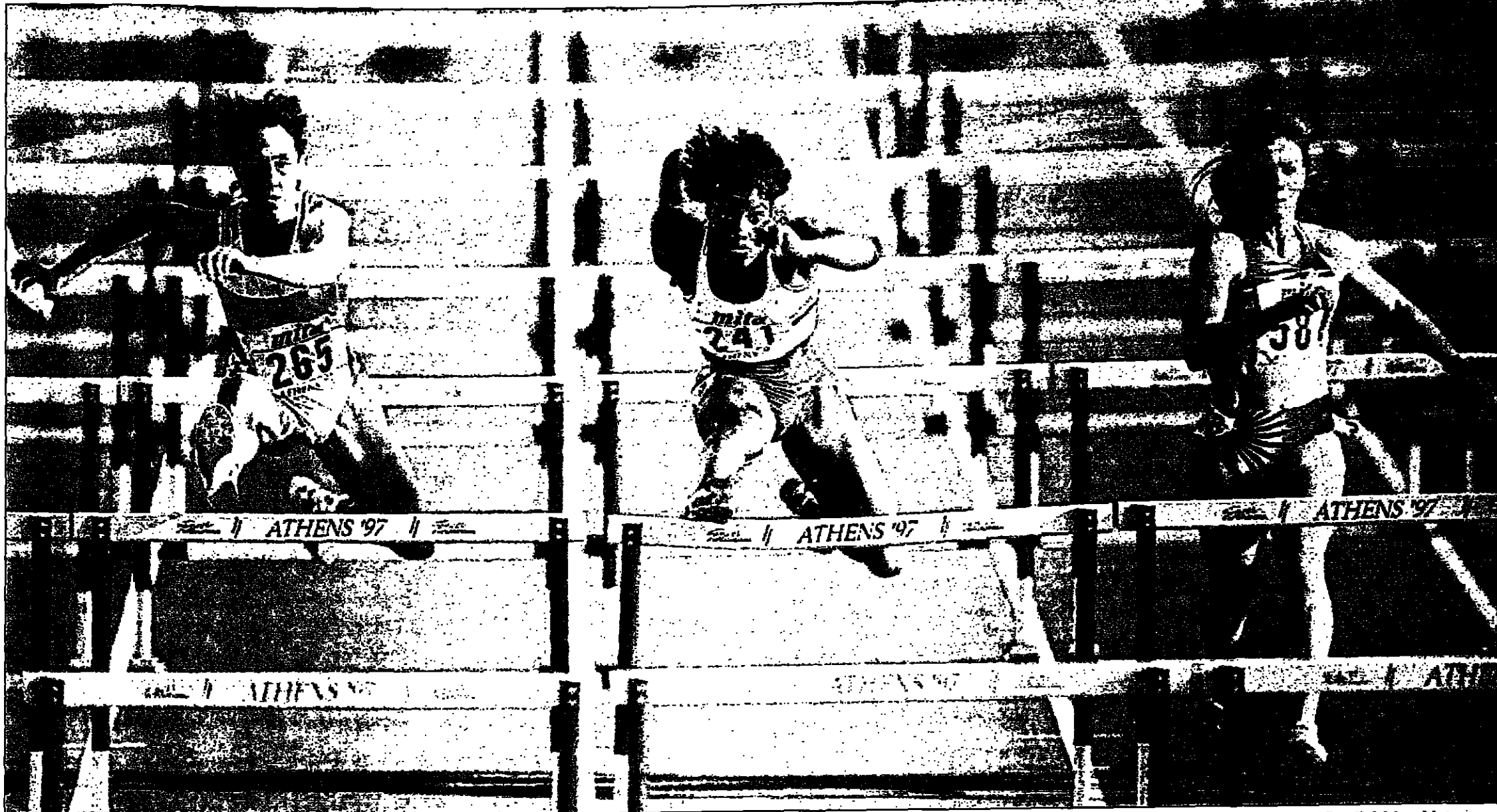
Until now, British sport has mirrored the British constitution in that it has been built up piecemeal over the years. The new proposals seek to establish an American-style constitution - a coherent system conceived as a whole. The idea of an academy was vigorously promoted a couple of years ago by the then Sports Minister, Iain Sproule, who arrived back from a tour of Australia's Institute of Sport in Canberra with a missionary gleam in his eye.

The worry at the time for many athletes was that this would mean one huge facility which everybody would be obliged to travel to from all parts of the country.

There has been considerable vacillation over what would be the ideal model to pursue, to the point where some of the contenders who were knocked out in the early rounds of bidding have suggested, more than half seriously, that they should be allowed back into the process because the criteria had altered so much.

The fears within the British sporting community were calmed by the decision taken by Chris Smith, the Culture, Media and Sports Secretary, to consult widely with sports governing bodies over the project - which Smith described as "fundamentally flawed" - once the Labour government came to power. The message Smith and the Sports Minister, Tony Banks, received was that what was required was a greater emphasis on regional centres connecting to a central hub.

Accordingly, there will be



Denise Lewis (centre) hits one of the obstacles during the 100m hurdles in the women's heptathlon in the World Athletics Championships in Athens earlier this year. Lewis was one of five British athletes who won silver medals, but the team failed to win a single gold. Supporters of the new academy hope that it will help convert British potential into world and Olympic titles. Photograph: Tony Marshall/Empics

eight regional centres in England, several in Scotland and one each in Wales and Northern Ireland - all of which will have to be accredited by the national centre.

Two sports - cricket and rugby league - have said they want to develop their own exclusive facilities. Those projects are still in the development stage. Other sports such as rowing and track cycling will base themselves at multi-use facilities outside Sheffield.

But the key element to the whole scheme is that all the parts are within a network

which will be able to co-ordinate its support. British competitors are about to start surfing the net towards Sydney.

Essentially, all the money and all the talk is directed at making the life of our sportsmen and women easier.

Last week, the international high hurdler Jacqui Aggepong talked excitedly of her involvement in the new athletics programme which has been set up at Bath University. In recent years she has spent as much time on the M6 as she has on the training ground because she has been obliged to make

separate trips to her coach, her physiotherapist and her doctor.

The essence of a sporting institute is that it should provide a one-stop shop for athletes such as Aggepong, allowing them to channel all that wasted energy into becoming faster, higher, stronger.

Thus competitors will be

able to remain in training at their local clubs while accessing expertise via their regional centre.

The furthest any athlete will have to travel for treatment, training facilities or support facilities at the Sheffield site will be three miles.

There will be widespread relief that the whole process is finally moving, at a time when many sports are learning how much money they are to receive from a separate National Lottery-funded scheme to benefit sport, the World Class Performance Programme.

The Sheffield consortium includes the city's two universities, two hospital trusts and the city council.

Among the reasons for its success, according to Smith, were that it offered a cohesive site with good transport and infrastructure, and that it had built on existing public investment in sports facilities in the city.

"We are absolutely delighted," a Sheffield City Council spokesman said. "We have always known that Sheffield had the strongest case for this because of the state-of-the-art sports facilities we already have."

"We are right in the middle of the country with great communications. And this is going to be a major plank in our regeneration plans for the city."

The British Olympic Association remained optimistic of playing a role within the overall framework of the Institute, even though it supported the rival Upper Heyford bid.

Dick Palmer, executive vice-president, said the BOA hoped to be involved in running the centre of excellence. "Naturally we are disappointed that the bid was rejected but there were three good bids and I suspect the fine facilities already in place in Sheffield counted in their favour," he said.

"I hope we will still have an input in to the academy. We have not heard anything about the management yet and we hope to be involved in that. We have anticipated we might be cherry-picked for the task but it is too early to speculate."

THE SPORTS TO BE BASED AT SHEFFIELD

Athletics	Squash
Swimming	Volleyball
Netball	Judo
Road cycling	Tnathlon

SAILING

Broughton aims to make Navy fly

The Royal Navy are flying the flag for British sailing in the Southern Cross regatta. Stuart Alexander reports from a baking hot Sydney on their chances of covering the White Ensign in glory.

The Royal Navy goes into battle here today led by a helicopter pilot, a nuclear submariner, and a land-based recruit training officer.

They join an enthusiastic, if still depleted, Southern Cross regatta for a nine-race series which ends with the 630-mile Sydney to Hobart race, starting on Boxing Day. As today is also forecast to be the hottest of the summer so far, basking in 30-plus degree temperatures may seem a good way to spend a British winter. However, the work-rate over an eight-day training period has been intense, with the helicopter pilot and skipper, Mickey Broughton, cramming manoeuvres and fitness training into long days of toil.

Having the submariner and navigator, Paul Methven, and the square basher and principal helmsman, Clive Woodman, aboard has left Broughton confident that he has assembled one of the best all-round RN crews.

The 14-strong crew will be racing the 43ft Quest - a modern, Nelson/Marek-designed yacht, which was sailed by Australia's 1996 Canada Cup team in Hawaii. Quest was also second in this year's Hamilton Island Race Week.

Broughton, the navigator on the joint services' British Defender in the 1989 Whitbread Round the World Race and a regular on Admiral's Cup yachts, sees this as more than a flag-waving exercise for Britain.

It is an important step forward in the Navy's return to top level competition.

They will have to be at their best if they are to take any top level scalps, one of which is being championed by another British arrival. Andy Beadsworth has been called in by Syd Fischer, the captain of the Australia team, to helm the 50ft Ragamuffin. Beadsworth, who raced in the Soling class at the Atlanta Olympics, will be doing his first Sydney to Hobart race - Fischer's 29th.

Still a few days from the entry to Sydney Harbour are the nine yachts in the Whitbread Race. Brunel Sunery and the overall leader Innovation Kvaerner appear to be profiting from taking the big drive south to look for fresh westerlies. Paul Cayard in EF Langue was estimated to have joined the leaders, having swapped his northerly option for a more southerly attack.

The fleet remains bunched over about 20 miles with any one of Paul Standbridge in Toshiba, George Collins in Chessie Racing, and Lawrie Smith in Britain's Silk Cut vying for the lead.

The boats have faced constant headwinds since the start on Saturday, which has meant frequent changes of tack and the necessary movement of gear and crew below deck that goes with it. The result is that the crews are now extremely tired.

Grant Dalton reported from Merit Cup that the boat had been under tremendous strain. "There is no doubt these boats are tough. We haven't broken anything, with the exception of a computer which gave up the ghost when we fell off a wave."

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE (third leg, 2,250 miles, Fremantle to Sydney): 1. Brunel Sunery (US) 2. P Standbridge (US) 3. Innovation Kvaerner (Nor) 4. Chessie Racing (US) 5. Paul Cayard (US) 6. EF Langue (US) 7. Paul Standbridge (US) 8. Paul Standbridge (US) 9. Paul Standbridge (US) 10. Paul Standbridge (US) 11. Paul Standbridge (US) 12. Paul Standbridge (US) 13. Paul Standbridge (US) 14. Paul Standbridge (US) 15. Paul Standbridge (US) 16. Paul Standbridge (US) 17. Paul Standbridge (US) 18. Paul Standbridge (US) 19. Paul Standbridge (US) 20. Paul Standbridge (US) 21. Paul Standbridge (US) 22. Paul Standbridge (US) 23. Paul Standbridge (US) 24. Paul Standbridge (US) 25. Paul Standbridge (US) 26. Paul Standbridge (US) 27. Paul Standbridge (US) 28. Paul Standbridge (US) 29. Paul Standbridge (US) 30. Paul Standbridge (US) 31. Paul Standbridge (US) 32. Paul Standbridge (US) 33. Paul Standbridge (US) 34. Paul Standbridge (US) 35. Paul Standbridge (US) 36. Paul Standbridge (US) 37. 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BOXING

Hamed signs £26m deal with Warren

There seems no limit to Naseem Hamed's earning power. Britain's highest-paid sportsman, can bank around £26m from a new deal struck with promoter Frank Warren.

The World Boxing Organisation featherweight champion has signed for another 10 fights under the Warren banner, with a new contract which starts in September.

Warren said: "He earned more than WBC heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis last year and his endorsements in the Middle East are unbelievable." Hamed's name appears there on orange juice, milk cartons and postage stamps among other items.

It is no wonder Warren does not flinch when he reveals that his Madison Square Garden venture, in which Hamed defends his WBO title against the New Yorker Kevin Kelley on Friday, is costing \$10m (around £6.7m) to set up.

Big American names on Hamed's agenda for 1998 are the WBO super-bantamweight champion Junior Jones - Warren has a contract for that fight to take place in London during Wimbledon fortnight - and the International Boxing Federation super-featherweight champion Arturo Gatti, from Montreal. A Gatti fight would be at super-featherweight (9st 4lb), a division higher for Hamed.

Breaking with traditional pre-fight preparation, Hamed went to play pool until 2am on Sunday. And he says he stays up until the early hours watching videos of his heroes like Muhammad Ali. With 28 successive wins, 26 inside schedule, Hamed does not see the need to conform.

"I'm enjoying myself. I've done a bit of shopping in New York, played a bit of pool and now I'll spank the Yank," said Hamed.

"I'm here to knock someone out - Kelley will be the one - and make Britain and the Arab world proud. I guarantee it."

"I predict the round in which I'll win, but it doesn't put pressure on me. I won't go out all tensed up. I'll heat someone up."

Pain must come with it, and Kelley will feel some. He'll take some serious shots.

"I've not come to New York to dance around and win on points. I've something to prove to the Americans who say I'm a flash in the pan. I'm looking for a full, clean collision - me hitting him, and him hitting the canvas."

Kelley has not been seen in his home city since Hamed arrived in a personal party which will swell to nearly 30 when his family arrive in force before his date at the Garden.

The former World Boxing Council champion may be more than a shade put out by the fact that Hamed is making all the pre-fight noise on his own patch. Kelley said: "You need to give him a beating. He needs it. The first round I'm going straight for his mouth. I've been saving everything up for the bell."

"I think they are jumping the gun with this guy. They are putting too much interest in a guy no one knows and who is not from this city and is not even from this country."

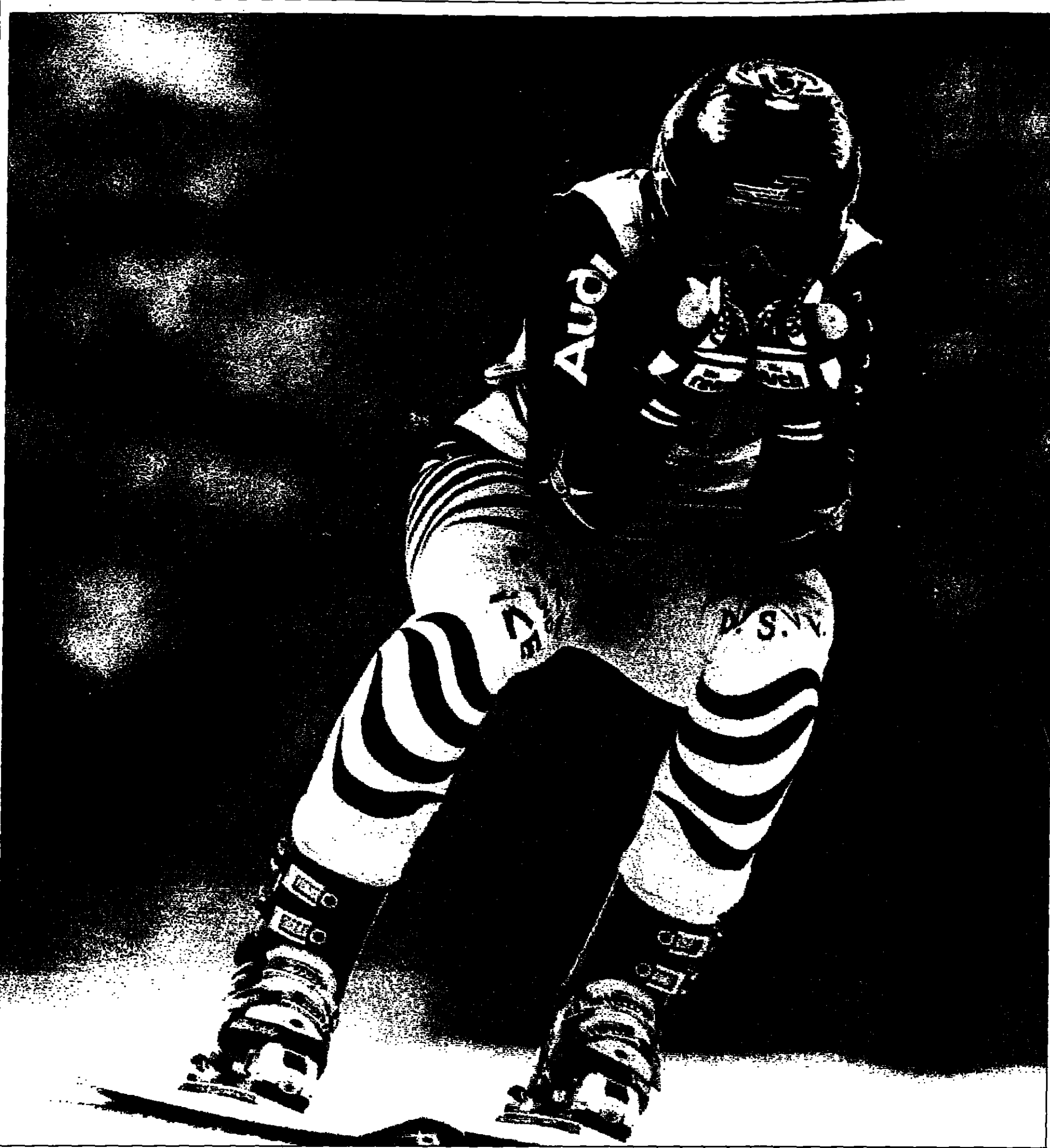
"When I fight, I fight with everything that's in me. I'm going to hit him with everything that I've ever been hit with. When the bell rings he's going to see me and know that I'm out to hurt him."

Hamed claimed that Kelley "has realised it will be his last fight... He will just turn up and give it what he's got. He's been world champion and been there before. He's no novice."

Hamed is hoping that Muhammad Ali will come to watch the fight and insists his comments were taken out of context when he was reported as saying he would go down in history as a better fighter than "The Greatest".

"I'm hoping more than anything that he's there," Hamed said. "The guy's my idol, my inspiration."

"If they ask me who is best between us, I must give my opinion. All I said was I can box five different ways. I wasn't saying I was better than him. He's a living legend."



Katja Setzinger, Germany's Olympic champion, sets the best time in training yesterday for the World Cup women's downhill in Val d'Isère today

Photograph: Pascal Pavani/AFP

RUGBY UNION

French begin a revolution prior to Five Nations challenge

Clive Woodward's willingness to sacrifice an entire herd of sacred cattle in selecting his sides for England's recent four-match international series may not have earned him the victory he craved, but it seems to have set a few hares running on the far side of the Channel. Yesterday, the French indulged in their own bout of "off with their heads" radicalism by ditching some of their most experienced and respected Test performers.

Philippe Saint-André, who

led the Tricolores to a record defeat against the Springboks in Paris last month, was omitted from a training squad due to meet next week to begin early preparations for the Five Nations' Championship. So too was Thierry Lacroix, despite his virtuoso performance for Harlequins against Wasps at the weekend, and, astonishingly, Abdel Benazzi and Jean-Luc Sadourny, acknowledged world-class assets at loose forward and full-back respectively.

Jean Claude-Skrela and his coaching sidekick, Pierre Villepreux, wielded their collective axe in other directions, too. Didier Casadei, the outstanding Brive loose-head prop, and his versatile clubmate, David Venditti, were also ignored, as were such luminaries as Olivier Merle and Laurent Cabannes. "We are not excluding anyone from future Test sides," insisted Villepreux. "We simply want to bring as many players as possible into our planning." A logical

move, perhaps, but a bold one all the same.

Bath, hugely embarrassed at their 50-point mauling by Saracens at the weekend, have been rather less imaginative in naming their side for this Saturday's do-or-die Heineken Cup semi-final with Pau at the Recreation Ground. Their four changes are wholly predictable: Mark Regan for Andy Lunn at hooker, Richard Webster for Eric Peters on the blind-side flank, Mike Catt for Richard Butler at

stand-off and a return to the left wing for Adebayo Adebayo, which will allow Matt Perry to switch back to outside centre.

There may, however, be a surprise twist on the personnel front. Adebayo, who strained his back in training before the Saracens match, remains a slight doubt and Bath have put Simon Geoghegan, their perpetually injured Irish wing, on standby. Geoghegan has played fewer than 20 matches since joining the West Countrymen three

years ago, thanks mainly to chronic toe problems that have required nine separate bouts of surgery.

Pau have made one change from the side who started against Leicester in last month's quarter-final, replacing the lock Thierry Menteries with Alain Lagourde.

PAU (v Bath, Saturday): N. Brucque, P. Bernat-Salvi, D. Dumortier, F. Lécuyer, Y. Maréchal, D. Aucagne, F. Trosclair, P. Trepel, J. Rey (capt), J.-M. Gonzalez, A. Lagourde, T. Cede, S. Klein, N. Baccou, F. Rolles.

— Chris Hewett

FOOTBALL

Sedloski arrives at Hillsborough

Sheffield Wednesday have signed the Macedonian international defender Goce Sedloski from the Croatian club, Hajduk Split, for £1.75m.

The Owls have agreed terms with the 23-year-old Sedloski and his club after he underwent a medical, but they may have to wait up to a month for their new man to make his debut while a work permit is obtained.

The Macedonian is Ron Atkinson's second signing since returning to Hillsborough. The Swedish forward Nicolas Alexanderson from IFK Gothenburg for £750,000.

Ray Harford has made his first purchase as the manager of Queen's Park Rangers, agreeing to pay £250,000 for Bradford City's Australian international midfielder George Kucsar.

Roy Hodgson is ready to throw a teenage striker, James Beattie, in at the deep end to help Blackburn Rovers' push. The Ewood Park manager has been unable to find a top-class forward to back up Chris Sutton and Kevin Gallacher, so

19-year-old Beattie may well face West Ham on Saturday.

The Scotland midfielder Billy McKinnay will miss Blackburn's Premiership match at home to Crystal Palace on 28 December and the FA Cup third-round tie against Wigan on 3 January after being booked for the fifth time this season at Arsenal on Saturday.

The Derby County manager, Jim Smith, could plunge a teenage rookie into Premiership action at St James' Park tonight. The 19-year-old Steve Elliott may earn his chance as injuries have ruled Smith's central defensive trio of Igor Stenac, Jacob Laursen and Christian Dally out of contention.

Bolton Wanderers' appeal against Alan Thompson's recent red card at Blackburn has been dismissed by the Football Association, so the midfielder will be banned for matches against Leeds, Barnsley and Everton.

The former Liverpool goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar, who was last week given a fine and a suspended ban for breaching FA betting rules, played for Oldham Athletic in a private practice match at Bury yesterday.

Grobbelaar, who was on Sheffield Wednesday's books earlier this season, may now sign a short-term deal for Oldham, whose manager, Neil Warnock, signed him for Plymouth Argyle at the start of last season.

Meanwhile, the Zimbabwe Football Association said yesterday it could not afford to hire Grobbelaar, the national team goalkeeper, as its coach, and has given the post to Roy Barreto, an army club coach.

— Rupert Metcalf and Alan Nixon

SPORTING DIGEST

American football

A new knee injury suffered by Jerry Rice, the San Francisco 49ers wide receiver, and a dislocated shoulder for Terrell Davis, the Denver Broncos offensive player, in the Monday game, will dent both clubs' hopes of reaching Super Bowl XXXII.

NFL: San Francisco 34 Denver 17.

Baseball

The Florida Marlins have traded their talented pitcher Kevin Brown to the San Diego Padres for three minor leaguers. The first baseman, Dierck Lag and the pitchers Rafael Medina and Steve Hoyt.

Basketball

NBA: Boston 100 Philadelphia 83; Toronto 101 Indiana 92; New York 93 Utah 86; Chicago 71 Phoenix 104; Portland 80 Atlanta 95.

Cricket

CHAMPIONS TROPHY (Sheffield, UAE) Final standings: P W L Pts RR. England 3 3 0 9 +0.22; West Indies 2 2 1 6 +0.44; Pakistan 1 1 2 3 -0.25; India 0 0 3 0 -0.41.

Final (Friday): England v West Indies. TOUR MATCH (Devonport final day of tour): Somerset 188 by 6 dec (D J Hill 88, C Cox 73, S Young 145, D Marsh 128) and 147 for 7 dec (J Tucker 44); South Africa 402 for 6 dec (W J Zonder 145, M V Rooyen 85, A A Donald 50) and 94 for 2 (J H Kallis 51); Match drawn.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP Group A (Pune, Ind): England 284 for 3 (C Edwards 173); J. C. 100; 18 (A Reynolds 4-0, England won by 208 runs. (Bombay): Australia 42 for 3 (B Clark 22); Denmark 49. Australia won by 263 runs.

Group B

New Zealand 3 3 0 9 +0.22; Sri Lanka 2 2 1 6 +0.44; Netherlands 1 1 2 3 -0.25; West Indies 0 0 3 0 -0.41.

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Football

Partick Thistle have been given a two-month stay of execution by their creditors. The Glasgow club, bottom of the Scottish First Division, have debts in excess of £20m and are currently losing £40,000 a month. A FIFRA CONFEDERATIONS CUP Group A (Riyadh, 8 Arabia): Saudi Arabia 1 (Ali-hammed Al-Khaleel 40); Australia 0. MONDAY'S LATE RESULTS: FA Carling Premiership: Manchester City v Aston Villa 0-0; FA Cup second-round replay: Stevenage 2 Cambridge 1; Rymans League Premier Division: Partick 2 Hibernian 2; United League Premier Division: Hyde 3 Spennymoor 2; United First Division Cup second round: Aston 1 Great Harwood 1; North West Counties League Cup second round: Colchester 0; Vauxhall 1; Portsmouth League First Division: Cambridge 1 v Rymans League Premier Division: Partick 2 Hibernian 2; United League Premier Division: Hyde 3 Spennymoor 2; United First Division Cup second round: Aston 1 Great Harwood 1; North West Counties League Cup second round: Colchester 0; Vauxhall 1; Portsmouth League First Division: Cambridge 1 v Rymans League Premier Division: Partick 2 Hibernian 2; United League Premier Division: Hyde 3 Spennymoor 2; United First Division Cup second round: Aston 1 Great Harwood 1; North West Counties League Cup second round: Colchester 0; Vauxhall 1; Portsmouth League First Division: Cambridge 1 v Rymans League Premier Division: Partick 2 Hibernian 2; 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Williams team acquitted of Senna's manslaughter

The burden of doubt has been lifted from the British grand prix outfit after a judge in Imola decided they were not responsible for the death of Ayrton Senna. Derick Alsop reports on a verdict which has also confirmed Italy's place in the Formula One calendar.

Motorsport's immediate future in Italy was assured yesterday when the six defendants in the Ayrton Senna trial at Imola were acquitted of the driver's manslaughter.

The judge took just 60 seconds to deliver his verdict at the end of a 10-month hearing. Frank Williams, team owner, Patrick Head, his technical director, Adrian Newey, the then team chief designer, and three racing officials were all found not guilty.

It is thought the prosecution will exercise its right of automatic appeal, which would prolong the legal process and uncertainty into 1999 and possibly beyond.

However, developments yesterday have served to remove any doubts hanging over next year's two F1 races in Italy, much to the relief of everyone involved in racing.

Motorsport's governing body, the FIA, warned that all its events in the country, including the grands prix of San Marino and Italy, could be cancelled if guilty verdicts had been handed down.

Senna was killed in the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix, at Imola's Enzo e Dino Ferrari circuit. The prosecution claimed the steering column in the Brazilian's Williams-Renault broke because of faulty modification work. The defence contended that the column snapped when the car hit a concrete wall on the outside of the Tamborello curve after leaving the track at 190mph.

Williams was virtually guaranteed his acquittal after giving

evidence to the court, two months ago, when he explained he had no direct input on technical matters. But the prosecution maintained to the end that Head and Newey, who has since joined the McLaren-Mercedes team, should be given one-year suspended sentences. There was never a suggestion any of the defendants would be sent to jail.

The judge decided there was insufficient evidence to convict any of the defendants.

None of the Williams officials was present at the makeshift court yesterday, but the team, who won both constructors' and drivers' championships last season, issued a

statement from their headquarters near Oxford.

It read: "Williams Grand Prix Engineering is pleased to confirm that Frank Williams, Patrick Head and Adrian Newey have been acquitted for all charges which were the subject of the Imola trial. Our legal advisers inform us that the prosecution has an automatic right of appeal. Clearly we would hope that this matter will not be pursued further."

"We firmly believe that this was the only appropriate outcome of the trial and now look forward to the 1998 season with confidence and enthusiasm."

Williams' lawyer, Peter Goodman, said at Imola that he

expected the verdict. "I felt the evidence went very much in our favour and that a verdict of not guilty was the correct verdict. The prosecution's evidence was not consistent and I felt it could not have led to a guilty verdict." He added: "Frank will be very pleased it is all over."

The judge has yet to give the reasoning behind his verdict and until he does so, the FIA's president, Max Mosley, a lawyer, is reluctant to comment, as a brief statement issued in Paris yesterday explained. The prospect of a lengthy appeal process gives the authorities further reason for caution.

But clearly, they cleared a significant hurdle in the me-

dieval town of Imola yesterday. Guilty verdicts would have held a threat of prosecution over every other team and official in the event of fatal accidents at future Italian races.

Mosley stressed at the outset of the trial that such a scenario would be deemed unacceptable and that his only course of action would be to withdraw motorsports under FIA's jurisdiction from the country.

The implications for a passionate motor racing name, Ferrari, and traditionalists everywhere were almost unthinkable. Imola and Monza are now confirmed as venues in the 1998 F1 World Championship

and team members will be able to work and compete without the pressures that have emanated from the Senna case.

The verdict does not, of course, unravel the cause of Senna's fatal crash, but it was not the specific objective of the trial. Its purpose was to establish the guilt or innocence of the six defendants.

The theories about the missing column, tyre pressures and objects on the track remain in circulation and the chances are that a definitive explanation may never emerge.

Mysteries abound in motorsport's history and in this case, as in others, the hidden truth will endure the legend.



Ride a crack horse: Dawn breaks in Cumbria yesterday as One Man, favourite for Boxing Day's big chase, is exercised by his trainer, Gordon Richards

Racing, page 25; Photograph: Julian Herbert/Allsport

Sheffield wins vote as site of new academy

Sheffield was yesterday chosen from a shortlist of three as the venue for the new national sports academy. Mike Rowbottom reports.

The city of Sheffield will host the key elements of a new network of top-class sporting facilities aimed at producing world-beaters of the future.

The £60m United Kingdom Sports Institute will form a new base for eight key sports - athletics, swimming, netball, road cycling, squash, volleyball, judo and triathlon.

Sheffield beat off competition from two other consortiums competing for the honour, based around Nottingham and Upper Heyford in Oxfordshire, in the final round of a bidding process that began a year ago with 25 prospective hosts.

Up to £160m of National Lottery money will be made available by the Home Country Sports Councils to finance a new network of facilities which will make up the institute.

Up to £60m of that will go towards a site that hosted the World Student Games in 1991 and already contains major facilities such as the Don Valley stadium, the Sheffield Ice Arena and the Ponds Forge international pool.

"This is an historic moment for sport," Chris Smith, the Culture, Media and Sports Secretary said.

"It fires the starting gun for the next stage in a process which I believe will provide our very best sporting talent with the facilities and back-up to help them challenge and beat the rest of the world."

"It will provide the very best in sports science, medicine, nutrition and coaching expertise and will stimulate an exchange of training techniques across a range of disciplines."

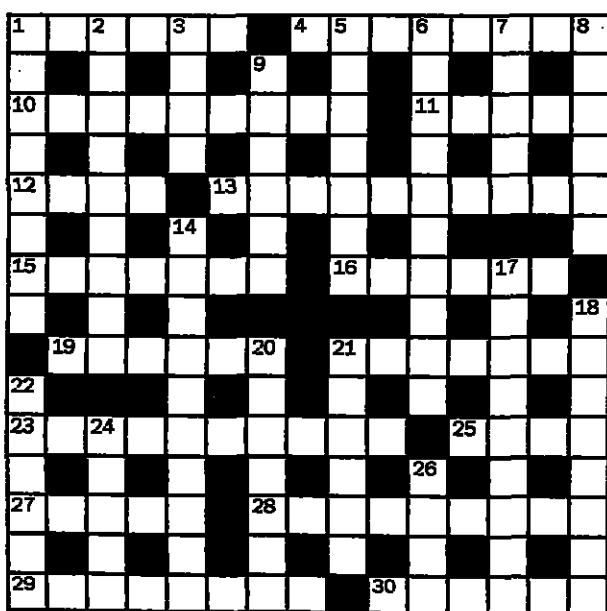
Sheffield's mission, page 26
Elland Road expansion, page 20

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3484, Wednesday 17 December

By Aquila

Tuesday's Solution



1. Find one in tarry mess? (6)
2. Paying homage to Sabine disaster (8)
3. Bar seven at table (9)
4. Number of Scouts taking inadequate time to return (5)
5. River analysis (4)
6. Half of Monday in West End, jostling for gifts (10)
7. Defining line of cricketer's first overseas trip (7)
8. Manipulate displaced bone with force (6)
9. Emaciated male agree to be re-shaped? (6)
10. Making clear profit from reticulation (7)
11. Authoritative mood in school (10)
12. Wild bear here on Welsh coast? (4)
13. Young officer once carried in cavalcade, triumphantly (5)
14. Meet with expert? That can be fatal (9)
15. Writer about to settle colour of eloper's boat (3-5)
16. Show great respect for American patriot (6)
17. Brits coo with excitement in such stiff dancing (8)
18. Judgement on the way? (4-5)
19. Suffer with stomach (4)
20. Party thrown before tea-time in the PM, once (7)
21. Cow mad? Tie it in, frantically (10)
22. Deck sailors after a party (5)
23. Keyboard operator, with endless strain, is on short time (6)
24. Standard headline (6)
25. Two ringers out of tune in Berlin, for example (10)
26. With arm through thick rope, that can be scaled (9)
27. Cause pain to give age, perhaps, that is about right (8)
28. Ravel finds medical specialist taking drink (7)
29. Perfect apprentice, presumably (6)
30. Sound of drinkers using this Roman chalice (6)
31. One's home at university, one in NE Italy (5)
32. Fare from France (British Rail, that is) (4)

FOOTBALL

Alan Hudson in 'critical' condition

The son of the former England midfielder Alan Hudson last night told how his family prayed for his life as the ex-professional footballer underwent emergency surgery.

The 46-year-old Hudson, who brought a special talent and style to Chelsea, Stoke City and Arsenal, was hit by a car while walking home in the East End of London on Monday night.

Hudson, who made his name in the Chelsea team which beat Real Madrid to win the European Cup-Winners' Cup in 1971, had earlier attended the Sports Writers' Association's annual awards at a hotel in Kensington.

He was said to be in a "critical" condition after undergoing a 14-hour operation at the Royal London Hospital for internal and head injuries.

His son, Alan Jnr, said that the family had been told to prepare for the worst, but now the signs were more hopeful.

"I had a phone-call at one this morning and have been at the hospital since," he said. "At five or six o'clock this morning we were told it didn't look like he was going to pull through."

"Me and my family sat in the chapel praying and he's turned it around somehow. They have stabilised the bleeding and got rid of a blood clot in the brain."

At one stage Hudson was in too bad a condition to be transferred from the operating theatre, where a specialist was called in to stabilise his condition.

His wife, Ann, who married her husband in Bermuda six months ago, said she did not know exactly how the accident happened.

"According to the police, Alan had apparently stepped off the pavement and was hit by a car. I can't believe it. We were only just getting ready for Christmas together - and now this."

Hudson's former wife, Maureen, said she has been warned that her ex-husband, whose injuries include a shattered pelvis, has a 50-50 chance of survival.

"It's awful. When I first rang the surgeon, he said it was touch and go, but now he says he has a 50-50 chance of pulling through. Alan's a fighter," she said.

Glenn Hoddle, the England coach, said: "I am deeply shocked by the news and can hardly believe what has happened. Alan was one of the outstanding players of his generation."

Graham Kelly, the chief executive of the Football Association, added: "This is terrible news and everybody at the FA is stunned. We can only hope and pray that Alan pulls through."

Owls sign Sedloski, page 27

CRICKET

Warne caught out by wide delivery from reporter

Shane Warne stalked angrily out of a press conference in Melbourne yesterday after being asked a question about his weight.

Warne was attending the unveiling of a waxwork double for Madame Tussaud's at a café he part-owns in Australia, when he was asked by a television reporter if he preferred the shape of his wax image, which looked considerably leaner than the leg spinner.

After a few moments' silence, during which Warne visibly reddened, he said: "That's why I don't answer any questions from you blokes. That's it, you've ruined it. Thanks very much."

Then, to the astonishment of the gathering, Warne stepped down from the podium after spending only a minute before the cameras and stormed from the room.

Warne's weight was a favourite target for chanting sections of English supporters during Australia's Ashes tour earlier this year and recently there has been comment about a noticeable expansion of his waistline and face. Some have speculated that he is as much as a stone overweight.

Even the touring South African cricketers have noticed, targeting him for on-field sledging and Geoff Marsh, the Australia coach, said last

weekend he was concerned about Warne's weight and had asked the bowler to monitor his diet.

Even so, Warne was in good spirits when he arrived for the function and applied his trademark zinc cream to the lips and nose of the wax dummy. He then invited the media to "feel free to ask any questions". When one reporter took him at his word, Warne took offence and left.

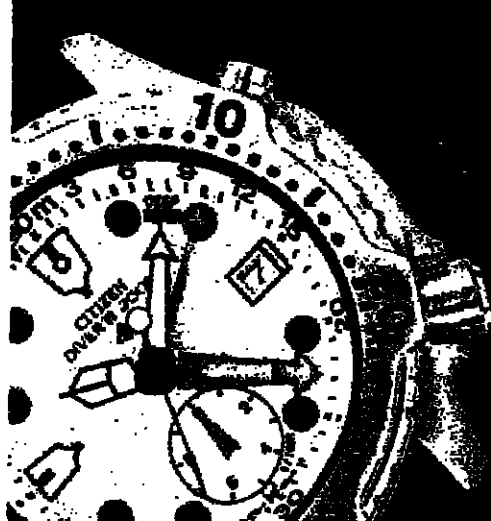
He will need to develop a thicker skin, like Australia's Test captain Mark Taylor, who had to learn to be more resilient about his weight, having been given the nickname "Tubby" early in his career.

Holloake's men, page 26



Shane Warne (left) comes face to face with his wax effigy

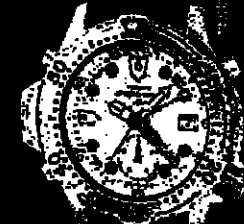
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